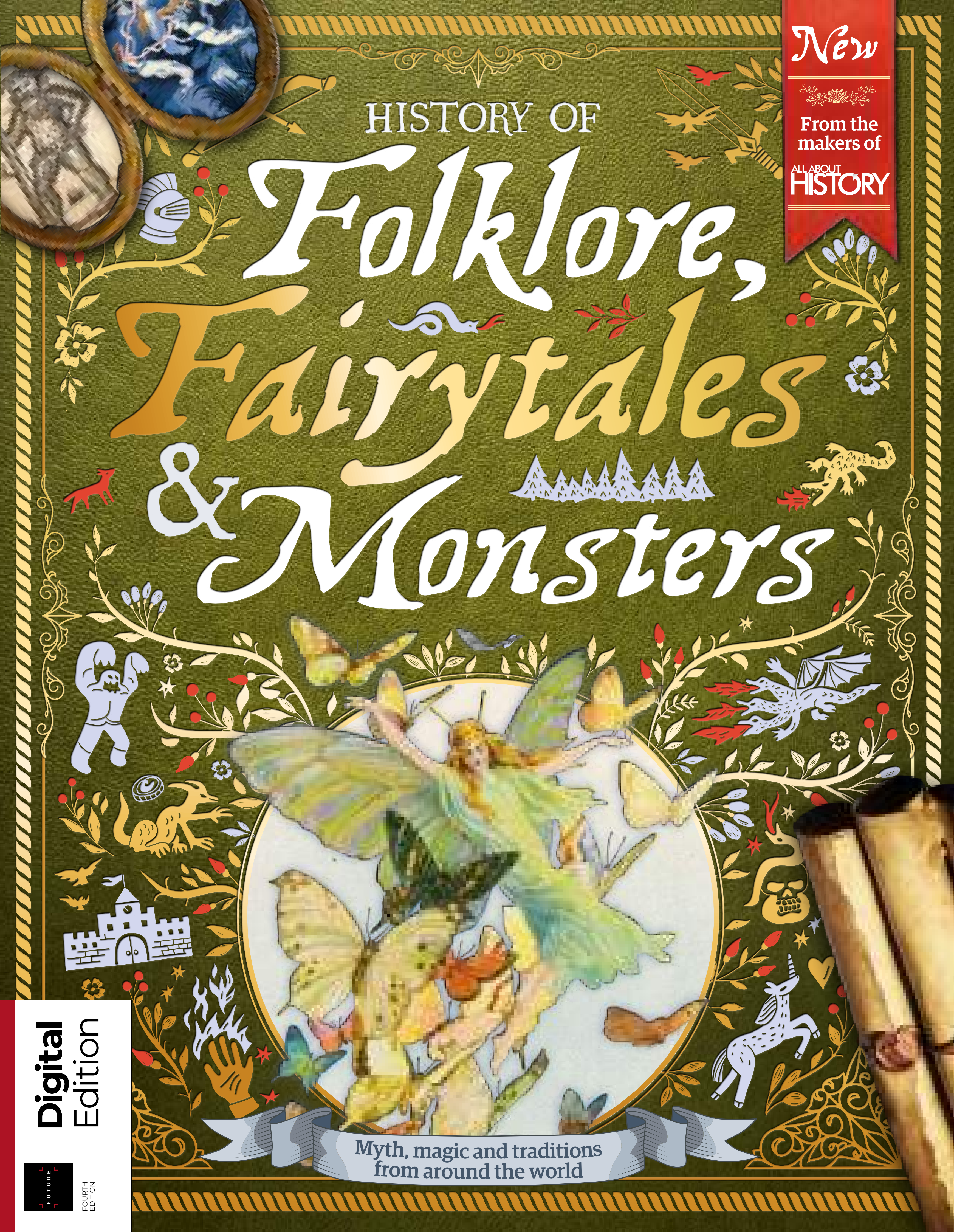

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HISTORY OF
Folklore, Fairytales & Monsters

Myth, magic and traditions from around the world

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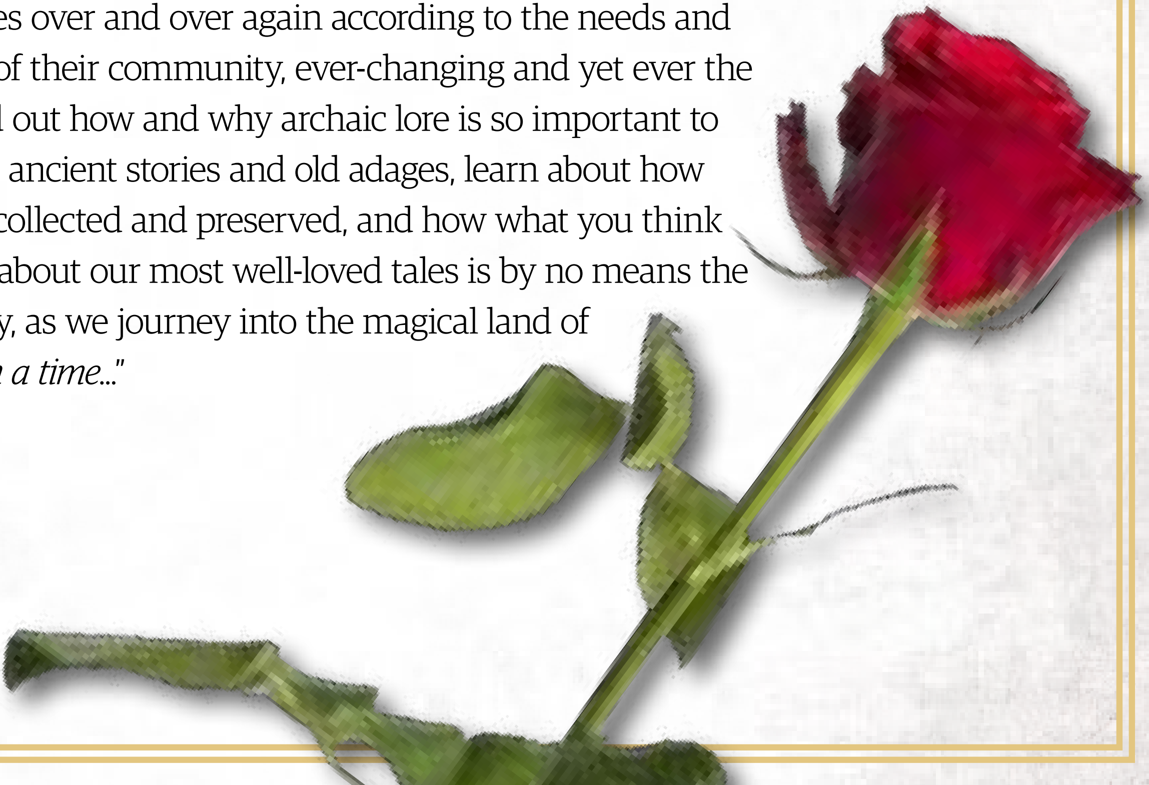
HISTORY OF

Folklore, Fairytales & Monsters

Fairytales, said GK Chesterton, are more than true, not because they tell us that dragons exist, but because they tell us dragons can be beaten. The problem is, famously, that Chesterton never said that; Neil Gaiman merely claimed that he did. It made for a good story. And that's exactly how folklore and fairytales work: the basic germ of an idea is built and rebuilt by storytellers and societies over and over again according to the needs and wants of their community, ever-changing and yet ever the same. Find out how and why archaic lore is so important to us, explore ancient stories and old adages, learn about how folklore is collected and preserved, and how what you think you know about our most well-loved tales is by no means the whole story, as we journey into the magical land of *"Once upon a time..."*



FUTURE

HISTORY OF Folklore, Fairytales & Monsters

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Cover images
Alamy. Thinkstock.

Photography
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Advertising
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Printed by William Gibbons, 26 Planetary Road,
Willenhall, West Midlands, WV13 3XT

Distributed by Marketforce, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5HU
www.marketforce.co.uk Tel: 0203 787 9001

History of Folklore, Fairytales & Monsters Fourth Edition (AHB4223)
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Future plc is a public
company quoted on the
London Stock Exchange
(symbol: FUTR)
www.futureplc.com

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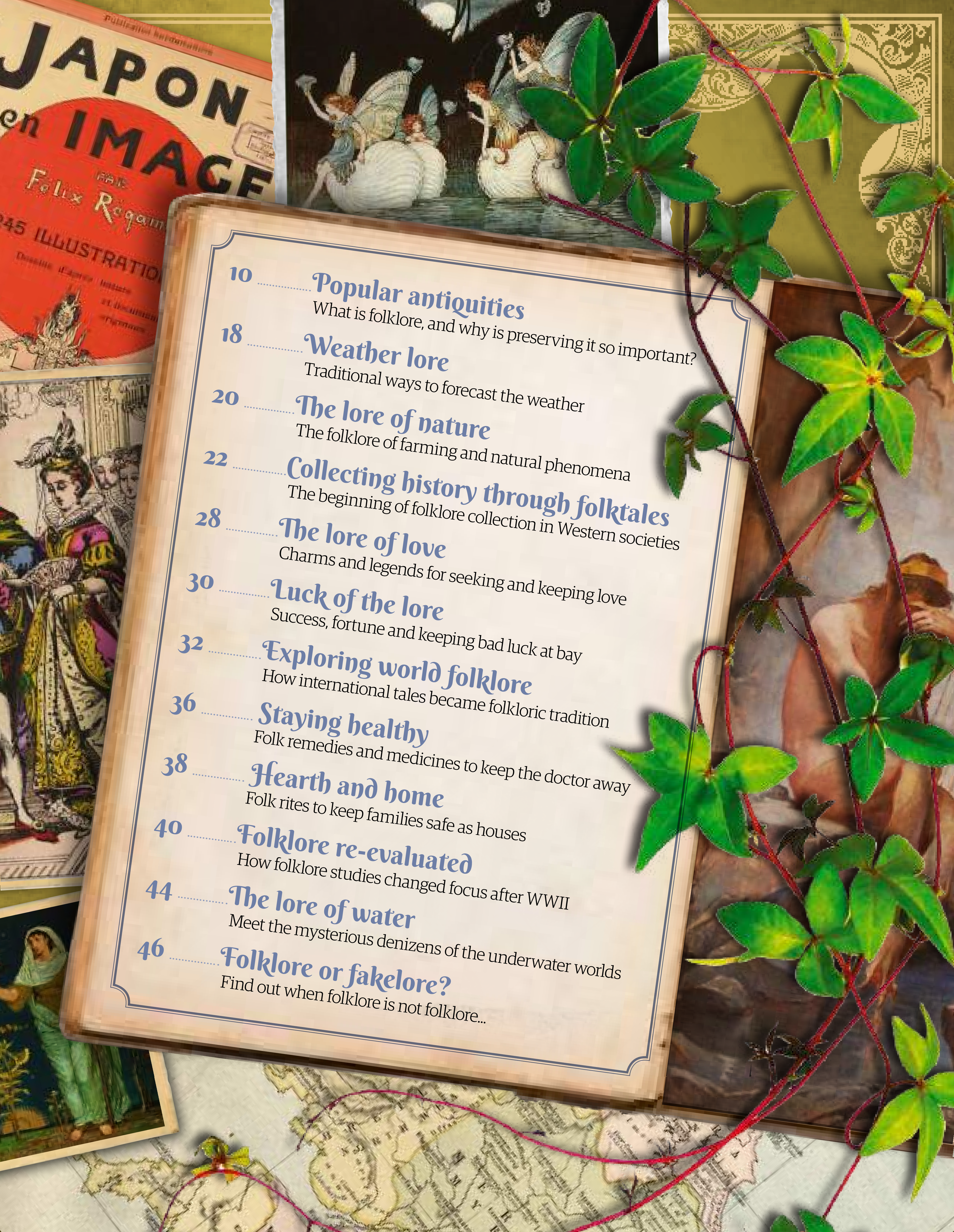

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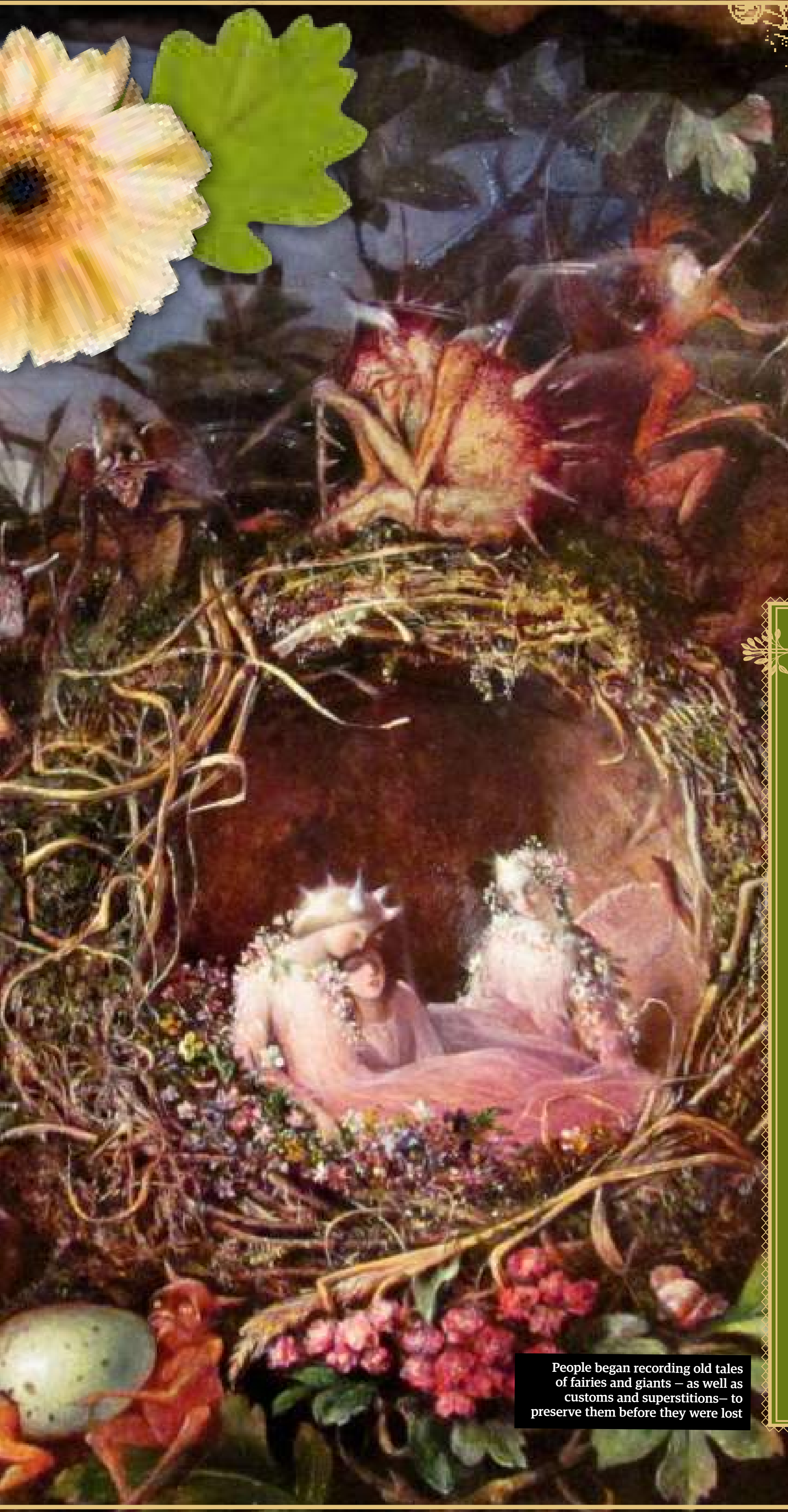
Popular antiquities

The importance of the beliefs, traditions and customs of the people has not always been recognised. So when did this interest in folklore begin?

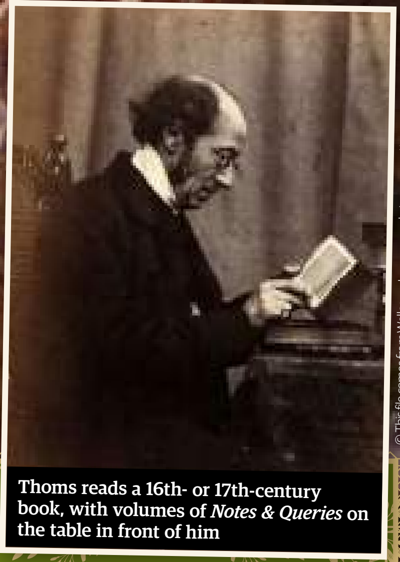
Written by Dee Dee Chainey

In 1846, the English scholar William J Thoms faced a conundrum. For many years, antiquaries had studied the traditional ways of everyday people, weakly referring to them as 'popular antiquities' and 'popular literature'. Yet, the meanings of these terms were murky; Thoms felt that they did not quite encompass the traditions of olden times, now at risk of being lost. In the face of this dilemma, Thoms came up with a new word - a neologism - to clarify the subject. In his letter featured in the *Athenaeum* of 22 August 1846, Thoms defined this area of study as 'folk-lore', and a new specialism was born, set to change the study of shared culture forever.

Made up of two parts, 'folk' and 'lore', Thoms intended the word to replace the old phrases to encompass a whole gamut of topics: 'manners, customs, observances, superstitions, ballads, proverbs' along with 'popular mythology'. 'Lore' comes from the Old English word 'lār', meaning 'instruction', indicating a body of knowledge and customs shared by a specific group, passed on by word of mouth - an oral tradition that passes from person to person, made up of stories, traditions, and traditional knowledge; the things that define the communities we belong to. 'Folk' refers to people in general. In early days of folklore studies, the word held negative connotations, with overtones of 'the common people', or even peasantry. Today, the term is less loaded with class bias, and indicates instead a group of people with characteristics in common: shared cultural signifiers, from the activities we take part in, or regional foods we cook, right through to how we dress and the uniforms that signify who we are and what we do. Such folk groups can encompass people from a country or region, to members of a family, or even a subculture.



People began recording old tales of fairies and giants – as well as customs and superstitions– to preserve them before they were lost



Thoms reads a 16th- or 17th-century book, with volumes of *Notes & Queries* on the table in front of him

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William John Thoms

1803–1885

William Thoms, born in Westminster, England, was a man of great intellect and ambition, publishing his first book by the time he was just 25 years old. Thoms was a clerk at Chelsea Hospital, a respectable but unremarkable profession, with a modest salary.

He married Laura Sale in 1828, and the pair had nine children together. In 1838, Thoms became both a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, and secretary at the Camden Society in the same year.

By 1845, Thoms secured a position in the House of Lords, acting as clerk in the printed paper office. Thoms was a scholar dedicated to antiquarianism, publishing, and of course folklore. Thoms dreamed of putting together a volume of scattered customs, similar to Grimm's *Deutsche Mythologie*.

After three years running his 'Folk-Lore' column in the *Athenaeum*, Thoms started the journal *Notes & Queries* in November 1849, for the purpose of collecting lore from people scattered all across the land.

While he claimed many published works, some under the pseudonym Ambrose Merton, his dream to compile a complete book on the folklore of England, sadly, never came to fruition. Despite this, his *Notes & Queries* formed the building blocks of British folklore as we know it today.

In 1863, he became deputy librarian at the House of Lords, resigning in 1882 on reaching the age of 79. Thoms died in 1885, and was buried in Brompton cemetery.

DANCE FIRST,
THINK LATER

Morris dancing, and other types of traditional folk dance, date back centuries and play a big part in folklore

What is folklore?

Many say folklore is all about times long past, from fairy tales and legends, to traditions and proverbs of old. Yet, is this really true?

In the past, folklore was seen to be solely about the ways of the peasantry, and its study solely for the affluent. It was less well regarded than topics like history due its focus on the tales and superstitions of the lower classes, hence less popular. Yet, many scholars like Thoms saw how the traditional ways of the people were falling into disuse: stories lost, songs forgotten, with superstition becoming a thing of the past, and country lore disappearing as people learned to read and write, moved to cities, and farming and traditional crafts gave way to industrialisation. Scholars realised that people employed folklore to pass on traditional knowledge, and took it upon themselves to record folklore to preserve this wisdom. Sayings such as, 'Rain before seven, fine by eleven,' from northern England contain old weather lore knowledge, while a perfect piece of lore teaching children never to eat blackberries after mid-October – when they might be spoiled – states that on Old Michaelmas Day the Devil fell from heaven on to a blackberry bush, which he cursed by spitting or urinating on it, rendering the fruit inedible.

Today, folklore is often divided into categories to make it easier for folklorists to classify and catalogue it. It is usually grouped into things people make by hand (material lore), things people say or sing (verbal lore), and things people create though their actions (customary lore). The fourth category is all folklore created by children (childlore).

While these categories seem quite simple, they contain widely varying types of lore within each. Verbal lore is one of the most straightforward, covering traditional stories: folk tales, fictional stories not generally believed to be true, including fairytales (stories with enchantments and magical creatures like giants and elves) and fables (tales with a moral or lesson, often with anthropomorphised animals, objects or forces of nature); legends, which are tales thought to have really happened long ago, that are realistic, but sometimes stretch to include miracles, and often tell of monarchs and heroes like King Arthur and Robin Hood. Myths fall into this category – as stories of the gods and origins of the universe – yet many consider it controversial to include sacred stories for traditions that are still practiced, like those of the Inuit or the various Native American communities. Songs like sea shanties and ballads also fall under verbal lore, as do nursery rhymes. The *Child Ballads* are some of the most famous verbal lore, a series of 305 traditional ballads collected in England and Scotland by Francis James Child in the 19th century. Proverbs are traditional sayings that contain everyday wisdom or truths, often using symbolism or metaphors, making them easy to remember. This is a type of verbal lore we often know without realising it, as parents often use proverbs like, 'People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones,' to teach their children

In souling, people went from door to door singing for soul-cakes, sustenance from the householders in return for the singer's prayers for the family's dead

the harsh realities of life! All of these types of verbal lore contain cues that each community recognises; they follow patterns that indicate what kind of information is being conveyed, for example, everyone knows that a joke is coming when they hear the phrase, 'Knock knock'.

Sometimes, it's strange to think that physical objects are folklore. The idea behind this is that the objects we make within our communities are grounded within traditional skills that we pass on to each other, and that they are a physical way to express our thoughts and beliefs about the world. Some types are to do with how we work, or eat: the traditional methods of making a fishing net, or how we prepare a regional dish, like a Cornish pasty or stottie cake. All types of traditional foods and cooking fall under the banner of 'foodways', and this is ingrained deeply in each of our lives. Other types of folk objects relate directly to expressing our identity; tartan production and clan patterns show this clearly – just by donning a kilt or scarf of a certain pattern and colours conveys so many hidden things about who we are, like our nationality and even our surname. Other types of hand-crafted objects are also folklore: traditional quilting, pottery and woodwork. Folk art is distinctive from fine art in that it is created by members of the community using traditional methods and ideas; training in educational establishments is not required, learning takes place on a community level. More sinister objects are also folklore: witch bottles, secreted up chimneys and under floors to protect from witchcraft, are one such group; witch marks another – often found scrawled on to beams of old houses near doorways and windows, to ward off malefic forces and protect those inside.

The things we do are also folklore: seasonal celebrations and festivals like Pancake Day, or life-cycle celebrations such as name days. Superstitions like not cutting a baby's nails for luck, or never turning beds on a Friday in case of shipwreck for sailor's families are all folk beliefs. Many of us have taken part in traditional customs without realising it, going trick or treating being a common activity for Halloween; some now seem older, and stranger, like souling: a precursor to trick-or-treating, and a form of the Halloween guising tradition. Souling in itself shows how all categories of folklore can combine: the visiting of the houses is customary lore, comprising of material lore in the form of baking soul-cakes, and accompanied by verbal lore, the traditional Souling Song:

'Soul, souls, for a soul-cake; Pray you good mistress, a soul-cake!'

Using Ouija boards, touching wood and even giving someone the finger while driving are all customs we might engage in without realising!

Indeed, we have seen a surge in the revival of folklore in modern times, with many of these customs and beliefs being taken up once more. Much folklore has seeded its way into modern revivalist traditions, and also religions like Wicca and Druidry. Practicing folk medicine is a practice often linked with these religions, and much plant symbolism, and plants' medicinal uses, are firmly rooted in folklore. The Wheel of the Year, the basis for the eight pagan festivals, are themselves grounded in folklore. The four cross-quarter days of Imbolc, Beltane, Lammas and Samhain stem from Celtic myth and legend, while the solstices and equinoxes are linked to the cyclical agricultural year. The Green Man, along with John Barleycorn, are often seen as either deities or symbols of the regenerative cycle of nature, and how the fields are planted, sown and harvested each year, a cycle that begins again the next year.

> "All types of traditional foods and cooking fall under the banner of foodways"

Types of folklore

Material lore

This includes physical objects that are thought of as traditional crafts, often made by hand or using traditional methods, even if production has become mechanised. Specialised knowledge to create these items passes from person to person. It can include traditional buildings, crafts like corn dollies, as well as items used for work.

Verbal lore

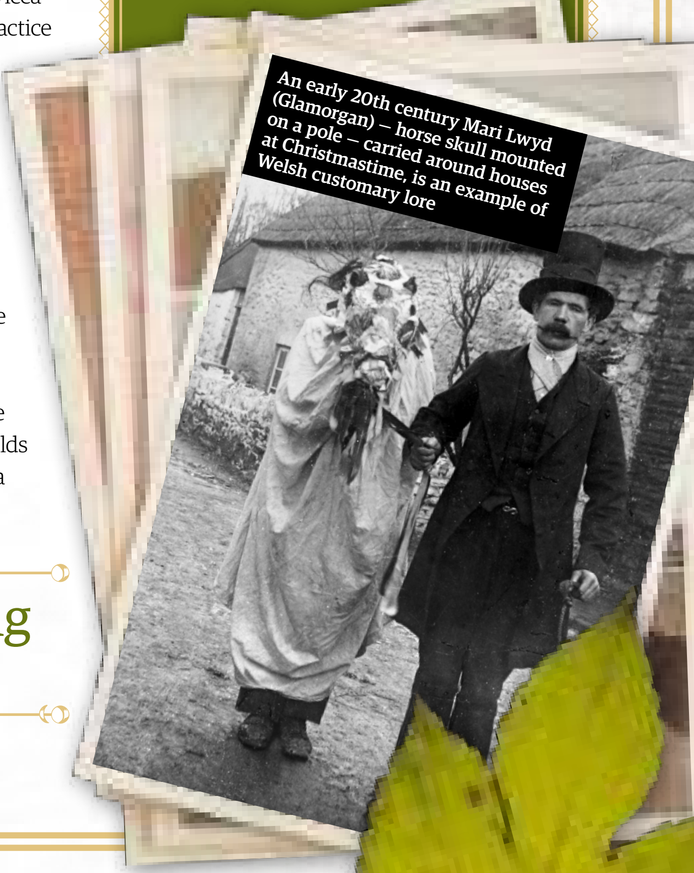
Myths, legends, fairy tales and folktales all fall in this category, yet other types of spoken lore too: proverbs, riddles and rhymes, through to folk songs and ballads, charms and spells. Even modern jokes and urban legends can be classed as folklore!

Customary lore

This category covers the performance of certain actions that need to be carried out in expected way, from calendar customs like observing festivals like the Padstow 'Obby 'Oss festival, to Morris dancing, and other community events, right through to more personal traditions, like First Footing for New Year's Eve. Trick or treating, practical jokes, and even folk medicine and herbalism fall into this group.

Childlore

This is just the same as any other folklore – yet created and shared entirely by children! From counting and rope rhymes, it also covers children's games, and scary stories they tell each other around campfires.



An early 20th century Mari Lwyd (Glamorgan) – horse skull mounted on a pole – carried around houses at Christmastime, is an example of Welsh customary lore

Telling stories and passing on knowledge are important parts of folklore

The significance and relevance of folklore

The passing on of folklore, whispering a tale or superstition from one to the next, keeps folklore alive!

Folklore is, intrinsically, about performance, action and communication. It's about how our traditions, customs, beliefs and stories all join together in our everyday lives to create a meaningful shared experience. Without this moment where customs and beliefs are transmitted from one person to another, folklore cannot exist. Folklore is experiential; a living, thriving thing that dwells in the spaces between people, and the meanings they fill that space with. Folklore is not just about academics recording old songs, it's the act of giving a birthday gift, of baking mince pies and the shared experience of eating them. Even folk objects have a level of 'performance' that makes them folklore, be that in passing on the skills and knowledge with which they're created, or in the rituals and customs that surround the times they are used. In essence, folklore must be shared, passed on, transmitted, in order to keep it alive.

In days of old, bards like Taliesin were the traditional keepers of tales, and they carried myths and legends of our forebears for us - tales of legendary heroes like Culhwch and his giant, Ysbaddaden, from the Welsh *Mabinogion*, or the legends of Arthur and Merlin. This is what we often think about, when we consider oral tradition. Yet, the passing on of verbal lore is not limited to stories: it lives on today in every nursery rhyme we learn as children, then tell as adults. By hearing the words 'Hip, hip, hooray' added after the *Happy Birthday* song, again and again, we too learn to add them and we enact this year after year, hand-in-hand with the customary lore of the blowing out of candles while making a wish.

Of course, we must not forget the material lore involved with the baking and decorating a birthday cake, which shows us just how the instructions for making objects need to be preserved and taught. Without these elements that symbolise a birthday, the party just wouldn't have the same meaning – we know this because our own families passed on this knowledge to us. Other traditional food recipes are passed on and taught in similar ways: family recipes are scribbled as notes, and folded into recipe books that many of us still carry with us, whether we keep them secret or otherwise. Much of tangible folklore and objects is about context; rather than being about performance and transmission like

The Up Helly Aa procession ends with guisers throwing their torches into a replica galley. Afetrwards, participants sing the traditional song *The Norseman's Home*

customary or verbal lore, how an object fits into the wider scheme of folklore is about where and how it appears, and the symbolism surrounding this.

How the skills and knowledge for both the making of an item, and how it is used, are passed on and shared within the community is also a vital aspect of its folkloric nature.

Sometimes, it seems that the most obvious type of folklore is our customs, as these are the things that are most obviously performed: everyone considers a Morris side performing at a festival to be folklore. If we see a play being performed, with a dragon and knight, the opponent - either Slasher or the Turkish Knight - and a quack doctor, many can guess that the knight is in fact St George, and they know that a mumming play is being performed, usually at a specific time of year like Christmas, Easter, Plough Monday or All Souls' Day. Similarly, wassailing events take place around the UK each Christmastime and through January, an orchard custom where rhymes are recanted, and people sing to the apple trees for a good harvest.

Many such events have been rekindled, rather than having a continuous history; Up Helly Aa, the Shetland festival that celebrates the end of the Yule season is one of these. This stemmed from an older tar-barrelling custom, developing into a torch-lit procession in the 19th century, and then into the festival we know today, where a replica Viking longship is set alight. What all of these customs have in common is that they are actively practiced and performed; they need to be practiced to be passed on, and this is what makes them part of folklore. As one generation of mummers dies, one by one new members will be added to the troupe, and each of these learns the old ways of performing the mummers' plays, and knows the words each character recites, and in this way the custom endures, from one generation to the next.

Interestingly, children's folklore can be seen as some of the most authentic, in that it truly is transmitted as folklore should be: their rhymes and games evolve as they are passed from child to child. In contrast, much folklore transmitted and performed by adults is somewhat 'purist', in the sense that it's approached with a very preservationist attitude, as if the original version of a rhyme or custom - and only this version - is the one true form. Yet this defies the idea that the transmission of the lore itself is what makes something folklore, in all its fluidity.

For all types of folklore, there is often a 'tradition bearer' who will pass on the lore and customs, be this an adult, an instructor, or another member of the community. This is one half of the equation, while the audience, or recipient of the knowledge, form the other half. The 'frame' is also part of this equation: a background to which the folklore is set, so people know it is folklore, and understand what type of information it is, or what is about to happen. A location for a folk dance might be the frame, or the words 'Once upon a time' for a fairytale, and shows that it is fiction, outside of time, and follows different rules to normal everyday life. 'Framing' is just one of the four characteristics that denote a cultural performance, the others being: playfulness, using symbolic language, and the use of the subjunctive voice or mood. The latter is a grammatical way of speaking that conveys wishes, judgments and actions that have not yet taken place, to make the events obviously separate from real life, showing that what is happening is part of a performance, and creating a 'make believe' world that an audience can slip into. Within this, they suspend disbelief, and different rules apply, allowing traditional knowledge to be passed on, ideas to be conveyed, and thoughts to be tested in a theoretical framework, without the constraints of normal thinking and everyday rules getting in the way. For example, when listening to the tale of *Jack and the Beanstalk*, hecklers from the audience shouting things like 'Beanstalks can't grow that tall' are usually few and far in between!

> "Interestingly, children's folklore can be seen as some of the most authentic"

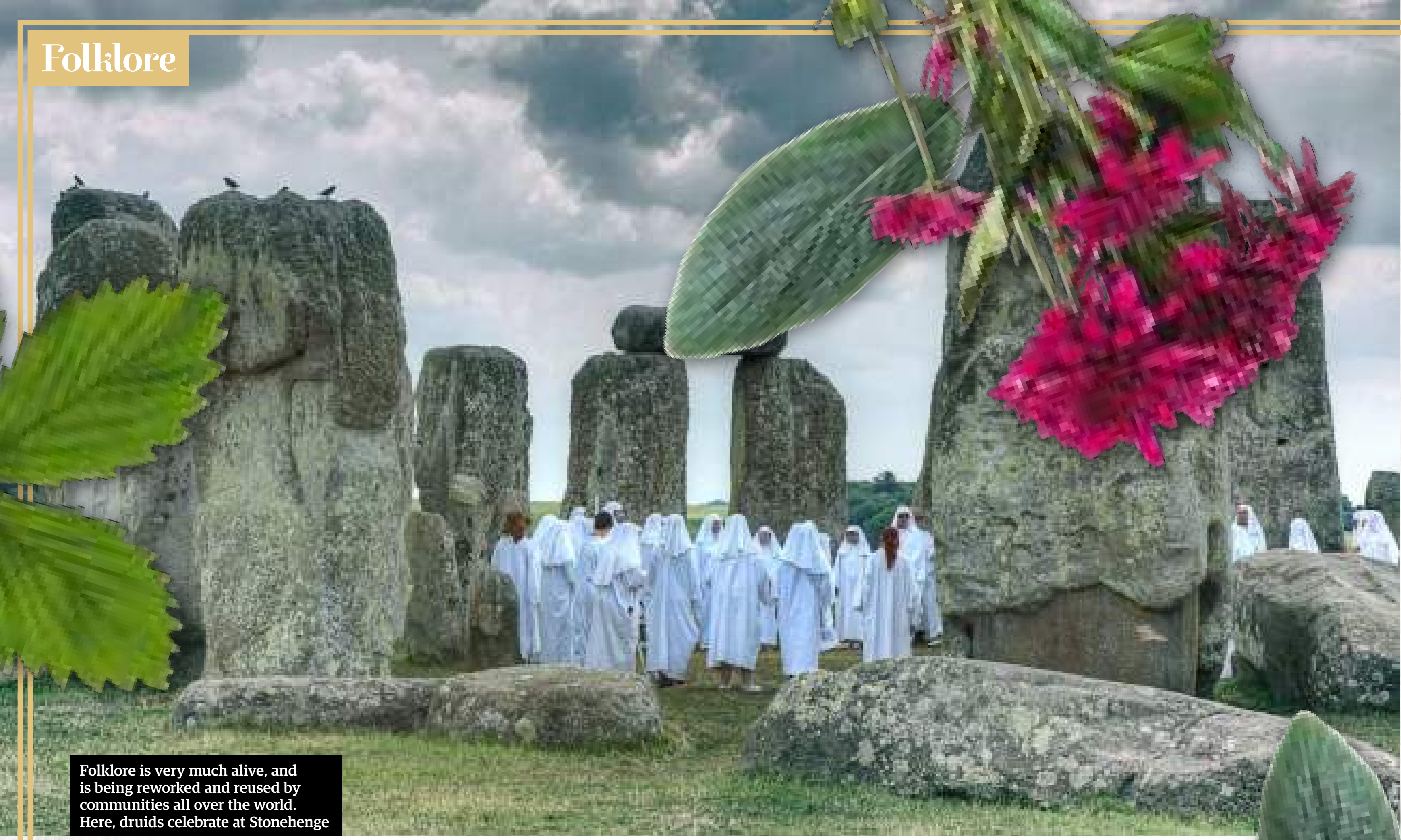
Cultural shards

While transmission, and the communication of ideas, are vital aspects of folklore, sometimes folkloric songs, rhymes, stories, objects or customs come down to us without a context. They lose their relevance because they are no longer needed within their culture, becoming defunct and obsolete.

Soon people forget, and no longer know what they mean, and they become mere 'cultural shards'. These folk artefacts are the remnants of traditions of times long gone that are now without context, and therefore without meaning in contemporary culture. Before World War II, all folklore was considered in these terms: purely as vestiges of the past, passed down by and to common folk, and collected as individual objects or examples of lore, that merely needed documenting and cataloguing before they disappeared, with no additional data or context attached to give these snippets any wider meaning.

After the war, more attention was given to setting each folk artefact within a wider social framework — specifically by attaching a date and region — to embed it within a cultural context, and therefore imbue each phrase, object or custom with much deeper meaning and social significance.

Before World War II, items like these concealed shoes would be collected and catalogued, but the wider context and meaning of their concealment would be ignored



Folklore is very much alive, and is being reworked and reused by communities all over the world. Here, druids celebrate at Stonehenge

Yet folklore lives on

Folklore is not old and dead, it's very much alive today, and being created and reworked by each of us!

While the Folklore Society was founded in London in 1878, folklore itself has seen a resurgence of an altogether different kind in the last 50 years. Folk music and traditional crafts became popular with the proto-hippies of Europe at the turn of the century, but this came into its own with the hippy counter-culture from 1958 to the mid-70s. Along with environmentalism, traditional techniques and organic farming methods of food production became a central focus for such groups.

The 'back to the land' movement of the 1960s was coupled with an interest in spirituality, particularly Native American beliefs in the US, and the 'old ways' of ancient times.

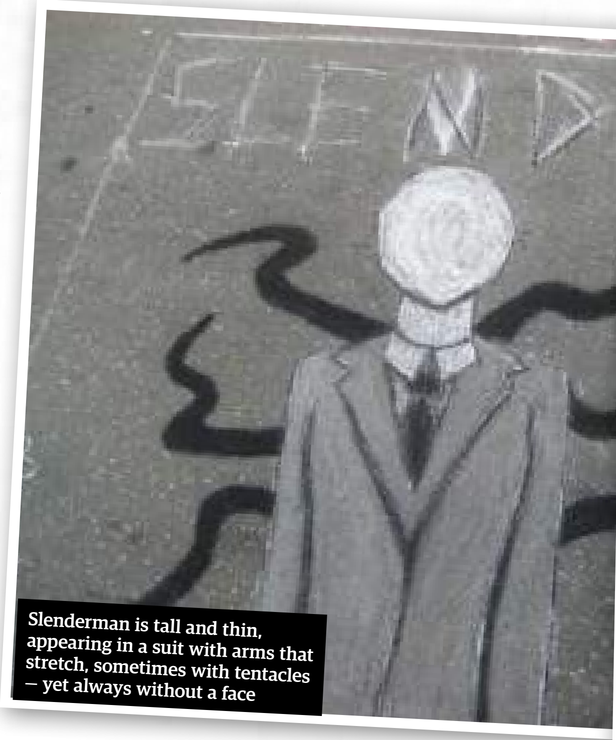
Folklore was used as a throwback to simpler times that were more in line with the natural world, and allowed those in the subculture to create a new form of identity with these ideals, by using traditional culture and folk music to connect them to the land, and provide a sense of place and foster belonging.

This resurgence in itself paved the way for neopagan communities, who became prevalent in the 1980s and 90s. While many neopagan traditions claim a long history, others take elements from a number of different ideologies including archaeology, anthropology and folklore, as well as spiritual traditions from across time and history. Much neopaganism draws upon folk beliefs and customs from around the world.

In a more secular revival, living history societies are more popular than ever, and battles are being re-enacted, ancient crafts revived, and old methods of cooking and producing items such as tools, weapons and clothing are very much in vogue – in essence, a resurgence and revival of traditional folk crafts. Along with this, the early 2000s saw the Scandinavian forest school style model for education take hold in the UK, offering children a very tangible learning experience grounded in the natural world of the woodlands. While these schools offer a very much a 'stories round the camp fire' approach, storytelling as a whole has seen a massive resurgence in its own right, both in performance, and at a community level. While there's a growing interest in traditional folk music, new types are emerging. Folktronica is just one of these, stemming from festivals like Homefires and The Green Man in the early '00s, blending traditional and psychedelic folk with electronica.

While folklore is taking hold at a community level, the media is never far behind. The TV show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* appeared in 1996, and the interest has grown from there. Since then we've seen series like *Grimm* and *Once Upon a Time* from Hollywood, and of course, Neil Gaiman's *American Gods*. Films with folklore seem never-ending, and the most prominent director drawing on folkloric themes is Guillermo del Toro, his enigmatic Pan creeping into many nightmares, and leading to many mothers checking for mandrake roots under their birthing beds. Folklore is taking hold of our imaginations, and doing what it has always done, being rewritten for contemporary society, with motifs and morals made workable for the new generation. Books like Lari Don's *Girls, Goddesses and Giants* sets girls as their own heroines, and retellings of classic fairy tales with a modern, feminist bent from authors like Angela Carter, Barbara G Walker and Kate Bernheimer show women how they too can wield their own power. This is a perfect example to show how folklore is not static – folklore is fluid; it changes and is recreated anew with every telling, with each generation.

Stories, traditions and customs move right along with the societies that use them; folklore is not just of old things and old times, it's living and breathing as we ourselves are.



Slenderman is tall and thin, appearing in a suit with arms that stretch, sometimes with tentacles – yet always without a face

Internet communities are now creating their own lore. Slender Man is a prime example. Slender Man appears in a suit, with an elongated neck and arms, yet without a face. Tall and thin, he stretches his body to catch his victims.

Devised in 2009 by Eric Knudson after an online prompt to 'create something creepy', the Slender Man phenomena soon took hold, and fan fiction began to abound. Soon, people began to report actual Slender Man sightings.

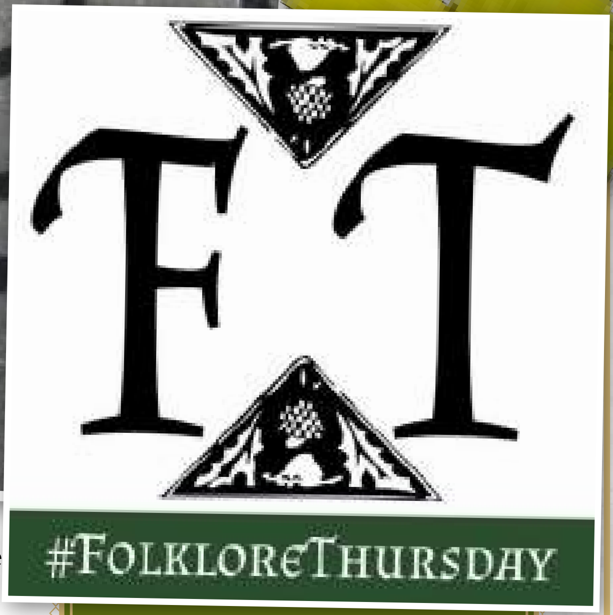
Folklore is now able to spread faster than ever before with the advent of the internet, and many digital memes and urban legends exist entirely online. Slender Man is an example of 'folkloresque', something that seems like traditional folklore, but actually just mimics it, often in popular culture. Think of modern fairytale retellings as the perfect example, where traditional motifs, characters and symbolism are reinvented and used in new ways.

'Fakelore' is something entirely different. This is when something that could be mistaken for true folklore is manufactured and presented as if it's real folklore. 'Folklorismus', however, is when an older, dead tradition is revived, often because of tourism, and some consider the Welsh tale of *Gelert the Faithful* to be just such a story.

Folklore certainly has a darker side. Just as it is used to underpin identities and connect people with a sense of place in positive ways, it can also be used for ill. Many alt-right groups, including neo-Nazi and other far-right factions, have appropriated traditional folk culture and beliefs, particularly that of Germanic and Nordic groups, as a way to instil a sense of national pride that overspills into pure xenophobia and racism. Folklore and 'tradition' can be used to exclude anyone who does not belong to the folk group, and used to promote protectionist, isolationist and white-supremacist ideas. This is not a new phenomena, and is epitomised in the nationalist slogan 'Blood and soil', stemming from the 19th century German ideals of uniting a supreme, pure race ('blood') within a defined place ('soil'), idealising the life of the lower classes that worked on the land as united by their shared folk culture, using this to underpin differences between people who identify with this ideal, and the Jewish members of society, as part of an anti-Semitic nationalist agenda.

While folklore can be a powerful tool for division, it is also a unifying force, showing how we are all human: we all have traditions surrounding births and marriages and the things that join people; every community has rituals and words to honour the death of their loved ones; we all come together in festivals and celebrations; we all share jokes and laughter; we all cry the same tears - and by sharing our customs and traditions we see the commonalities, irrespective of where we're from. Our stories and traditions are an inherent part of us, every community tells tales of love and sadness, of toils, of adventure, of hopes and fears. When we listen to someone else's story, we see past the veneer of culture: we see their intrinsic humanity in the tales they tale, mirrored in our own.

> "Folklore is now able to spread faster than ever before with the advent of the internet"



#FolkloreThursday is a weekly hashtag day on Twitter, where people share their own folklore related articles, images and facts

#FolkloreThursday

#FolkloreThursday began as a Twitter hashtag day in 2015, the brainchild of Willow Winsham and Dee Dee Chainey. The aim was to create a place online for people to share their own blog posts, images and facts, far away from private archives and expensive journals, making folklore accessible to all. The hashtag snowballed quickly, with people tweeting globally each week, and the team were soon featured in *The Independent* newspaper and on *BBC Trending*.

The #FolkloreThursday website launched in 2016, and now features folklore articles from contributors all over the world, from authors, artists, academics and researchers.

The success of #FolkloreThursday in itself shows that folklore is gaining public interest, but this is something that runs much deeper than mere entertainment: folklore speaks to us about who we are, where we come from – something particularly important in such politically charged times when there are a lot of social pressures. People are engaging more and more, keen on preserving and sharing folklore worldwide, leading to people learning, understanding and sharing their own customs and stories more than ever. Sharing this personal lore, and reading the folklore others share too, is a way of fostering understanding, building bridges between communities by revealing our similarities, rather than our differences, and showing we're all connected on a fundamental level.

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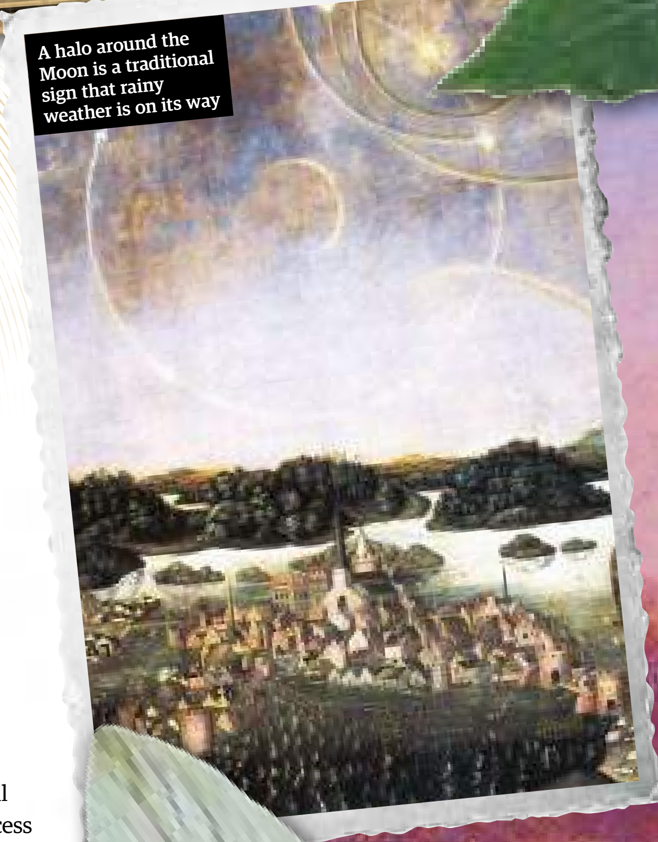
Weather lore

Getting the weather wrong can be a matter of life and death

Written by Rebecca Greig



A halo around the Moon is a traditional sign that rainy weather is on its way

Humans have been interested in the prediction of the weather forever, and folklore relating to the weather, even now, plays an important role in our day-to-day lives.

Even after the invention of scientific weather prediction equipment that makes far more accurate predictions, many people around the world still stand by the old lore. Commenting on the weather is not only about prediction, but also acts as a way of socially interacting with others - the one thing that every single person has in common is the weather, so of course there are many stories, myths, and beliefs about it.

No doubt you will have heard of the common "Red sky at night, shepherd's delight; Red sky in the morning, shepherd's warning" proverb. A red sunset probably means that there will be dry weather the next day. The redness in the sky is caused by high pressure.

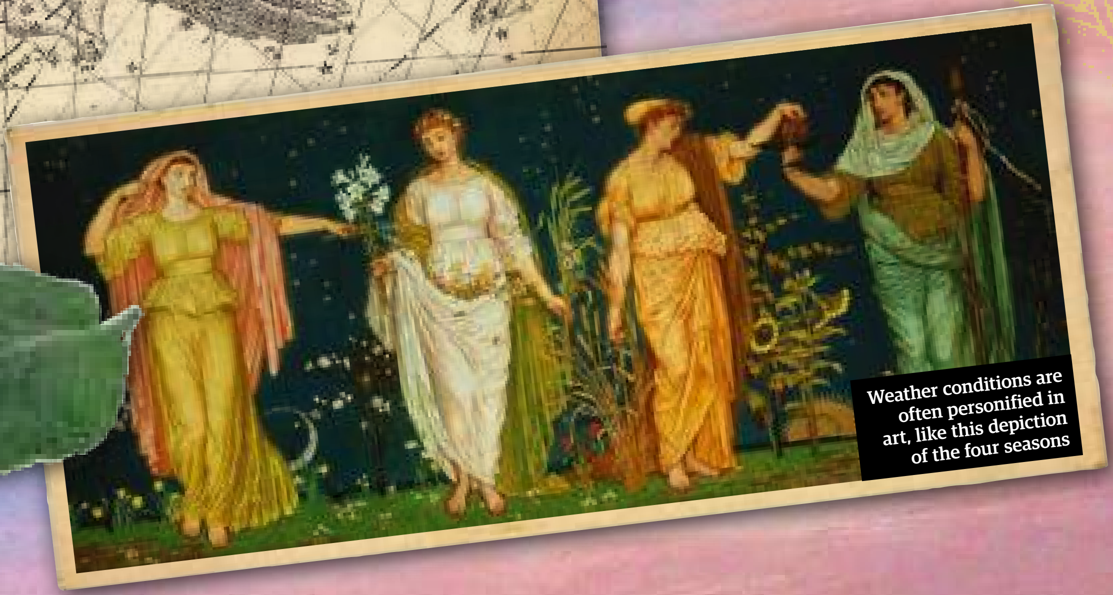
Another common weather proverb is "When clouds look like black smoke, a wise man will put on his cloak". This is said to be describing the appearance of when thick storm clouds absorb sunlight, giving them an appearance that resembles black smoke.

Predicting future weather and environmental conditions is often the difference between success and failure, and in some cases even life and death. Think about the merchant sending ships off to trade or the farmer wanting to plant crops and rear animals. An incorrect prediction or the inability to predict what the weather might do could result in catastrophic consequences. This is why folklore relating to the weather is so important.

According to some tales a moonrise occurring in the evening brings fair weather. Traditionally the sun and moon play important roles in predicting the weather.

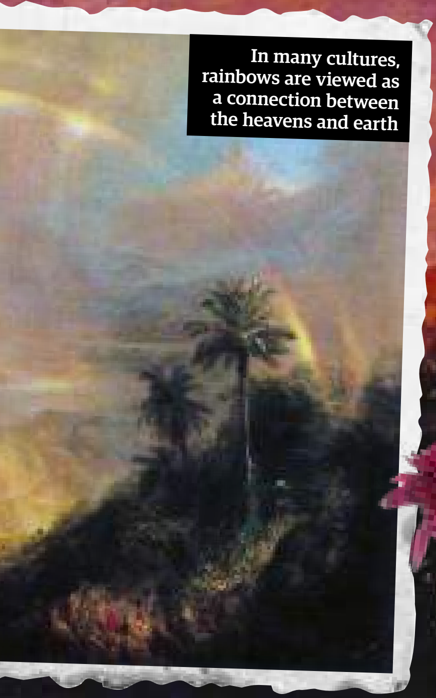
Another known saying is; "A summer fog for fair, a winter fog for rain. A fact most everywhere, in valley or on plain". This is a way of predicting the weather after a period of fog. Fog is formed when the air cools enough so that the vapour pressure creates condensation instead of evaporation.

In some cultures mythical creatures are the cause of bad weather. In Bulgarian folklore dragons appear and unleash their powers in the human world in the spring and summer, causing droughts, torrential rains, thunderstorms; they even have power over the fertility of the fields and the fates of people. Weather is important enough to assign to the most powerful folkloric creatures.



Weather conditions are often personified in art, like this depiction of the four seasons

Cloud formations were often used to predict weather conditions



In many cultures, rainbows are viewed as a connection between the heavens and earth

"Loki is sowing his oats"

Jutland proverb describing heat shimmer

"It's an ill wind that blows no one any good"

Traditional English saying

"The weather vane will not work without wind"

Maltese proverb

It's believed that a ring around the Moon – a rainbow-coloured halo – will bring rain. They're caused by light bouncing off ice crystals in the upper atmosphere, in the same way that rainbows are caused by water droplets. So it's likely that seeing one will indeed bring on some rain, as it means there's plenty of water in the sky!

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The lore of nature

Farmers relied on tales and myths to ensure their crops would survive – all you need is a pregnant woman and some rusty nails, apparently

Written by Rebecca Greig

Lore to do with nature and farming was considered vitally important and influences the practices of many cultures. Understanding the land was as important as being able to predict the weather. A failed crop could result in loss of money or even starvation.

Lore surrounding the Moon is said to be important for farming. The old practice of farming by the Moon stems from the belief that the Moon governs moisture in the atmosphere. Pliny the Elder discussed the importance of the Moon in his *Natural History.*

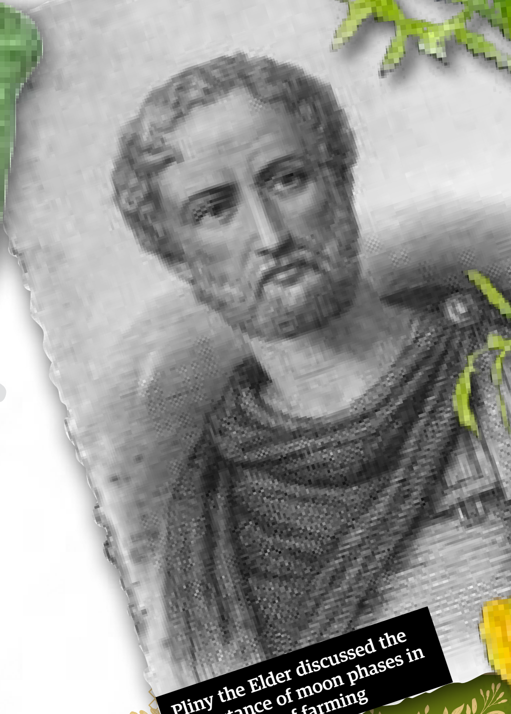
According to legend, the New Moon and first quarter are considered to be fertile and wet, which means that this is a good time to plant above-ground crops. The best time to kill weeds, prune, and plant below-ground crops is just before the Full Moon, as it is considered to be a particularly wet time too. According to myth the castrating and dehorning of animals should be done when the Moon is waning for less bleeding, and you should slaughter animals when the Moon is waxing for juicier meat.

Apart from using the Moon, farmers often relied on other myths and beliefs to ensure success. Placing rusty nails in the garden when seeds are planted is said to help them grow, a pregnant women planting seeds guaranteed that they'd thrive, and crops should only ever be sown from North to South.

There are many location-specific traditions to do with farming. According to Bulgarian folklore the holiday of Trifon Zarezan is much loved for its focus on wine. In the folk calendar the first days of February are dedicated to St Trifon the Pruner - during the celebration the vines are pruned for the first time and is said to be the best time for wine-making. The day is sometimes marked on 14 February according to the old Julian calendar, with a feast and lots of red wine.

Natural phenomena like volcanoes and other natural disasters often come with ancient mythologies to explain their behaviour. For example volcanic activity and eruptions have aroused fear and inspired myths in many cultures, some seeing active volcanoes as the abode of gods. Natural disasters were often seen as their wrath.

> "The best time to plant below-ground crops is just before the Full Moon"


Pliny the Elder discussed the importance of moon phases in the process of farming

> "Candlemas Day, stick beans in the clay; throw candle and candlestick right away"
>
> Traditional English saying

> "March'll search ye, April try ye; May'll tell, whether live or die ye"
>
> Scottish adage

> "Fields have eyes and woods have ears"
>
> French proverb

Many of us are familiar with the idea of giving up our favourite treats for Lent; the traditional foods to avoid are eggs and meat. Easter and the 40 days that immediately precede it tend to fall during a period known as 'the hungry gap', when winter-stored foods are running low and spring/summer fruit and vegetables are not yet ripe. In the northern hemisphere most food animals are also beginning their breeding cycle at this time - avoiding their meat and eggs gives them a chance to raise their young, resulting in more food animals later in the year.

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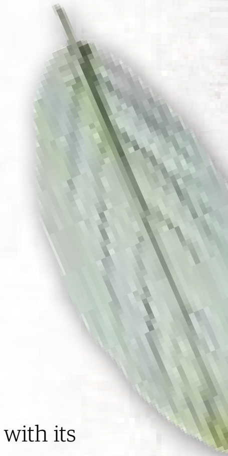
The Moon was thought to be an important aid to farmers and to govern moisure and rain levels

Successful farming relied on guesswork, superstition and myth back in the 1700s

Collecting history through folktales

Even through centuries of significant societal shifts, European folktales have managed to endure with the help of dedicated folklorists like Johann Gottfreid von Herder and Elias Lönnrot



Written by Poppy-Jay Palmer

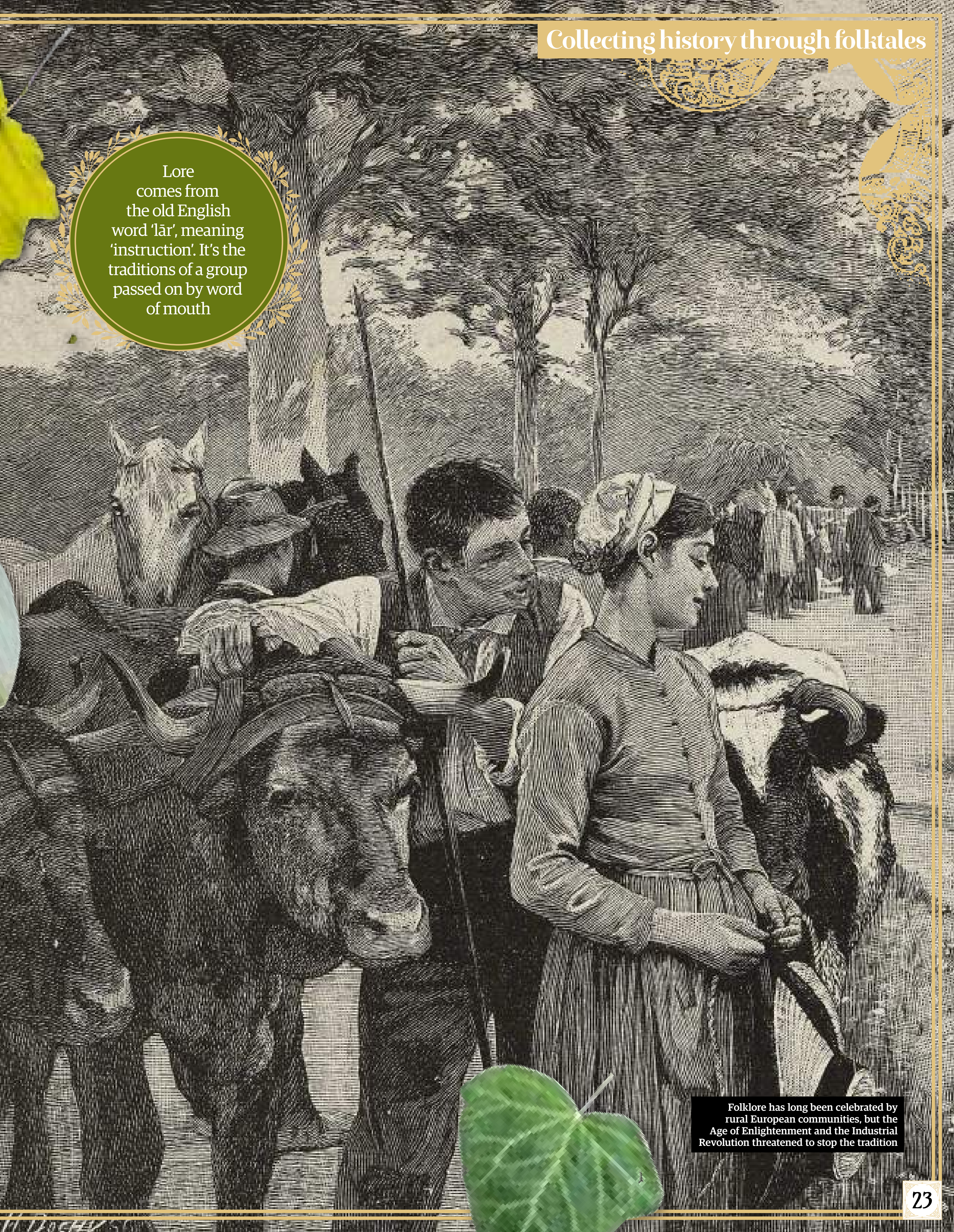
By nature, folklore is elusive. With much of the culture being transmitted through oral traditions, or by word of mouth, it's difficult to keep track of, and even more difficult to document. Folklore isn't something you learn through a formal education. Instead, if you are lucky, you are informally gifted it by friends and family, and through communities and performances in the form of songs, poems, tales, proverbs and even jokes. Naturally, the collection of folklore over the last few centuries has been as much about preserving the traditions as it has been about studying them.

The term 'folklore' was coined by English writer William Thoms in 1846, and was fabricated to replace the then-contemporary phrases 'popular antiquities' and 'popular literature'. The origin of the 'lore' part of the word is pretty simple, with the definition having stayed almost the same since the conception of the word 'folklore'. The 'folk' part, however, has been a cause of confusion among folklorists and more for centuries. When Thoms first coined the term, however, he applied 'folk' only to rural, poor and illiterate peasants. In our modern language, the word 'folk' is far more flexible. It is often used to refer to groups of people in general, as well as social groups consisting of two or more individuals with common traits who express themselves through distinct traditions. As a result of folklorists using Thoms' initial definition as a guideline, European folklore consists of stories, poems, ballads and more almost entirely from peasants. The selection of folk traditions now available to us may have been a lot wider if the word had had different connotations in the 1800s.

The different interpretations of the word 'folklore' have been known to hinder the collection and study of it over the last few centuries – when and where is folklore actually considered folklore? – but it hasn't stopped people from trying. Another major but unavoidable hindrance has been society, and how it drastically shifts with no warning over time, as it did with the dawn of the Age of Enlightenment (sometimes referred to as the Age of Reason) and the Industrial Revolution, all the way through to the First and Second World Wars.

The Age of Enlightenment kicked off in Europe during the 18th century, or the 'Century of Philosophy'. It was an intellectual and philosophical movement that commanded the world of ideas within the continent, and completely transformed the socio-political and literary scenes, with its effects flourishing during the French Revolution and beyond. Big thinkers of the period, of which there were suddenly more and more, would share their ideas through meetings at scientific academies, literary salons, coffee houses and the like, and spread them through the use of books and even pamphlets. The modern ideas that came with the Enlightenment would often undermine the authority of the monarchy and the Church, and instead encouraged a new way of thinking, seeing in the political revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries with ideologies like liberalism and neoclassicism. With ideas now centering on reason as the primary source of legitimacy and authority, academics (and even a lot of the general public) played a part in advancing ideals like liberty, tolerance, progress, constitutional government and the separation of church and state.

Due to this new way of thinking, putting reason above anything else, folklore began to change too. Before the Enlightenment, the belief in witchcraft (and indeed the practice of it) was commonplace among many societies. Its origins can be traced all the way back to the classical era, and has since had a continuous history through to the Middle Ages



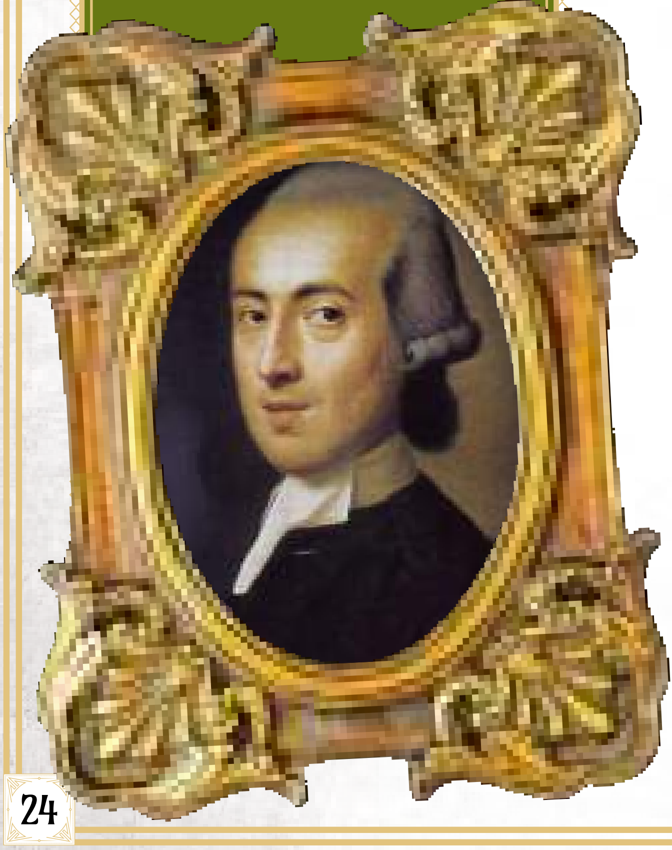
Lore comes from the old English word 'lār', meaning 'instruction'. It's the traditions of a group passed on by word of mouth

Folklore has long been celebrated by rural European communities, but the Age of Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution threatened to stop the tradition

Johann Gottfried von Herder 1744-1803

Through his work collecting folklore traditions, philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder helped inspire parts of the German population to get in touch with their sense of national pride. He believed that folk traditions were what united everyone, from the richest people to the poorest, represented by the Volksgeist, also described as the spirit of the folk. Herder famously said: "There is only one class in the state, the Volk (not the rabble), and the king belongs to this class as well as the peasant." Like national pride, the Volksgeist evolves and changes with the nation. On the surface, the concept is one of unity, but it must be exercised with caution: there has always been a fine line between encouraging patriotism and making a nation unite to go up against others.

Alongside Herder's own sense of national pride came a keen interest in language, too. Rather than using language as simply a form of communication, he believed that it was also responsible for the formation of thought, and therefore knowledge. "Language as a whole must be an expression of the cognitive understanding… in the formulation of the concepts themselves, and as such must prove itself as a living form," he said.



Folklorist Johann Gottfriend von Herder worked hard at keeping the tradition alive during the Age of Enlightenment through spreading national pride

and beyond. Early Modern witch-hunts started in Europe in the 15th century, hitting a high point from 1580 to 1630 during the Counter-Reformation and the European wars of religion, with an estimated 50,000 people being executed after being accused of practicing witchcraft. However, under the new philosophies of the Enlightenment and the advancement of science and medicine, the belief in witchcraft and magic began to die. With it, the belief in folklore also began to wither.

The Enlightenment was largely driven by scepticism surrounding traditional ideas and beliefs, with people needing more than just hearsay when it came to accepting the validity of legends and tales.

As a result of much of Europe's new way of thinking, writers and academics started to challenge existing knowledge and assumptions, instead demanding evidence and new information so they could reassess whether or not they wanted to believe what they had always taken as fact.

Many Enlightenment thinkers were empiricists, meaning they insisted that new discoveries had to meet new standards of proof in order to verify whether or not they could regard them as true. Logic and reasoning was all the rage, and people started developing what we now call the 'scientific method', incorporating systematic observation, measurement, and experiment, as well as the considered formulation, testing and modification of a hypothesis.

Before the Enlightenment, a large portion of knowledge was gathered from the likes of the writings of ancient forebears and religious teachings, rather than through reason and evidence. Folklore obviously suffered, owing to the mysterious, word-of-mouth nature of the tradition. Great thinkers of the scientific Enlightenment like Francis Bacon, William Herschel, Antonie van Leeuwenhoek and René Descartes began to seek scientific explanations for natural phenomena where previous knowledge had come from religion and folklore. After centuries of people trusting the tales they heard based on nothing whatsoever, folk stories and superstitions were suddenly seen as being somewhat crude, and were in danger of disappearing completely.

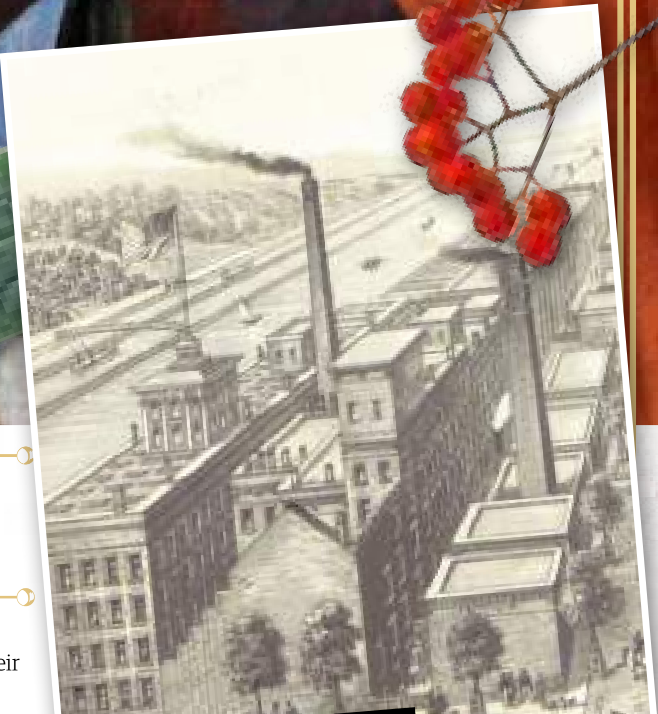
However, many folklorists from all over Europe worked hard at keeping the tradition alive. German critic, theologian and philosopher Johann Gottfreid von Herder was a prominent figure in the world of folklore and its collection during the 18th century, and his work greatly helped further its development. He believed that German literature would do well to revert back to simpler forms, which Herder called Volkspoesie (natural poetry), as opposed to Kunstpoesie (artistic poetry).

The Age Of Enlightenment was defined by scholars that wanted to bring society around to a new way of thinking and reasoning

According to many historians, Herder was the first person to use the word 'folk' (or in German, Volk) in print. During the time that Germany was starting to emerge as an identifiable political entity, he often recorded and analysed Germanic languages, and had a particular interest in traditional song texts published in collections of old songs from all over the world. Through his research, he discovered a vast array of traditional Germanic songs, tales and customs from ordinary people living ordinary lives.

As a German nationalist of the 18th century (a political stance that should be separated from that of the Nazis), Herder believed that society should reject the ideologies based on sectional appeal, most notably socialism in relation to the social class. He famously stated, "There is only one class in the state, the Volk… and the king belongs to this class as well as the peasant."

Herder ended up collecting folk traditions like folk dances and songs as a way to promote nationalistic pride and prevent the old traditions from becoming lost forever.



The Industrial Revolution saw a societal shift, with sophisticated city people looking down on rural peasants that trusted folklore traditions

> “Herder ended up collecting folk traditions like folk dances and songs”

The combination of Herder’s reputation as a respected academic and his enthusiasm for both folk-poetry and the previously despised German language ended up kick-starting a craze in Germany for neglected literature. The new-found appreciation of traditional poetry expanded into a mutual appreciation for all things folk, including folklore, dance, music, art and more.

Herder was also a key figure in the development of Romanticism, and as a result he presented oral traditions as organic processes grounded in locale in his writings of the 1770s. When Napoleonic France invaded the German states, many other German folklorists who systematised the recorded folk traditions ended up adopting Herder’s approach and utilised it while building Germany’s new national identity. The process became popular in other places too, and was quickly and enthusiastically embraced by smaller European nations like Finland, Hungary and Estonia, which were all seeking political independence from their dominant neighbouring nations.

Finnish physician, philologist and dedicated collector of Finnish oral poetry Elias Lönnrot found himself inspired by the work of Herder, with his life’s work accumulating in the compilation of the Finnish national epic called *The Kalevala*. It was formed from short ballads and lyric poems that he had managed to gather from the oral tradition during his almost equally epic research trips. At the time, Finland was in dire need of a folk epic in the vein of *The Odyssey*, *Beowulf* and *The Iliad*. The 17th century saw the first Finnish folk poetry finally written down, and both scholars and enthusiasts collected it in the following years. But by the 18th century, it slowly started to disappear from Finland, with the majority of the surviving Finnish folk poetry remaining in the oral tradition.

After obtaining two master’s degrees, one of which was on the language of the ancient Finns, Lönnrot set out on his field trips in 1833 with the intention of collecting an array of Finnish folk songs and poetry, and took dictation from the performances of folk singers. He even helped spread his new knowledge and brought joy to the places he travelled, reciting and retelling the poems and stories he had learnt on the field trips as he collected new ones, continuing the growth of Finnish folklore through the oral tradition. While he travelled, he slowly began to realise that the short stories he had learnt did not merely stand on their own; instead, they were part of a larger, continuous epic that he would weave together into

The Kalevala. When he finally reached the end of his quest for research, Lönnrot had made a total of 11 field trips within a 15-year period, visiting Russian Karelia, the Kola Peninsula and the Baltic countries, in addition to Finland.

The Kalevala was eventually published in 1849, and even today it is still regarded as one of the most significant works of Finnish literature ever created, and was instrumental in the development of Finnish national identity. It is also thought to have deeply impacted the intensification of Finland's language strife during the mid-19th century (Finland has two main official languages and several minor ones to this day), as well as the growing sense of nationality that ended up leading to Finland's independence from Russia in 1917. It even inspired JRR Tolkien's novels *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord Of The Rings*, as well as some of Finnish composer and violinist Jean Sibelius' greatest work.

> *The Kalevala* as we know it today consists of 22,795 verses that are spilt up into 50 folk stories, and was often sung to music

After the Enlightenment came the Industrial Revolution. Brand new manufacturing processes reached Europe in the early 19th century, and saw in another significant societal shift. The transition included exchanging hand production methods for machines and new iron production and chemical manufacturing processes, developing machine tools, increasing the use of steam, and advancing the factory system beyond all recognition.

Following the introduction of new ideologies, the 'intellectual elite' and the 'people' began to pull away from one another. As the transition into the Industrial Revolution continued, many agrarian workers were forced to emigrate from their farms and small towns in order to find new jobs in city factories. But those who continued with their agricultural lifestyle, often lacking a formal education, were dismissed by many of those who took to the Age of Enlightenment and benefited from the Industrial Revolution. The under-educated sectors of society were often treated as inferior.

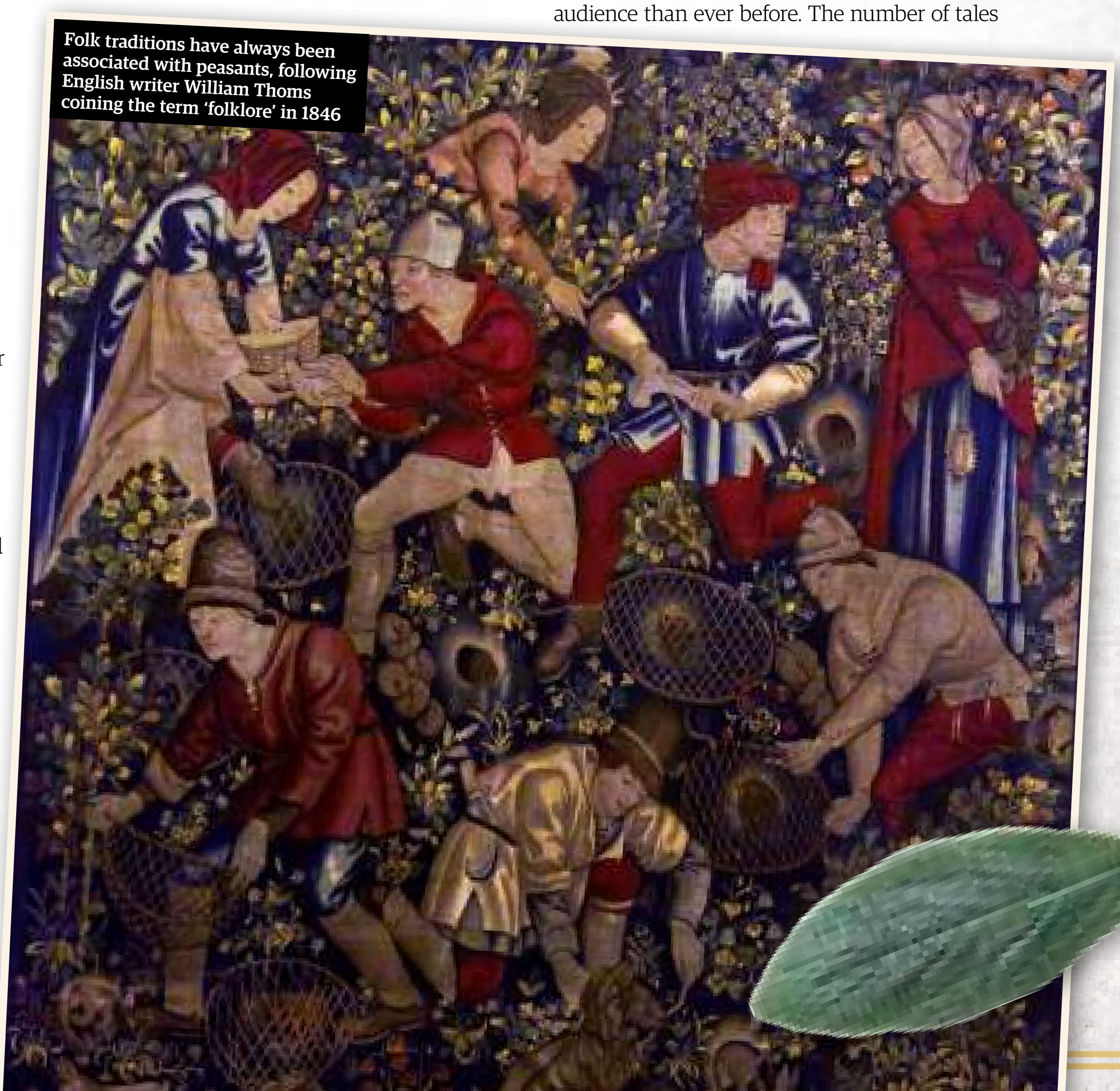
Appreciators of folk tradition feared that the stories and superstitions of the simple rural peasant class could end up being rolled over by urbanisation and mechanisation, and then lost forever. However, the agrarian people also sometimes ignited feelings of nostalgia among the city people; their way of life was simple, and collecting remembered folk traditions became a popular and respected activity, allowing the traditions to survive the revolution, despite every attempted to stamp them out.

Elias Lönnrot was inspired by the work of Herder, and used his interest in folklore to pen the Finnish national epic called *The Kalevala*

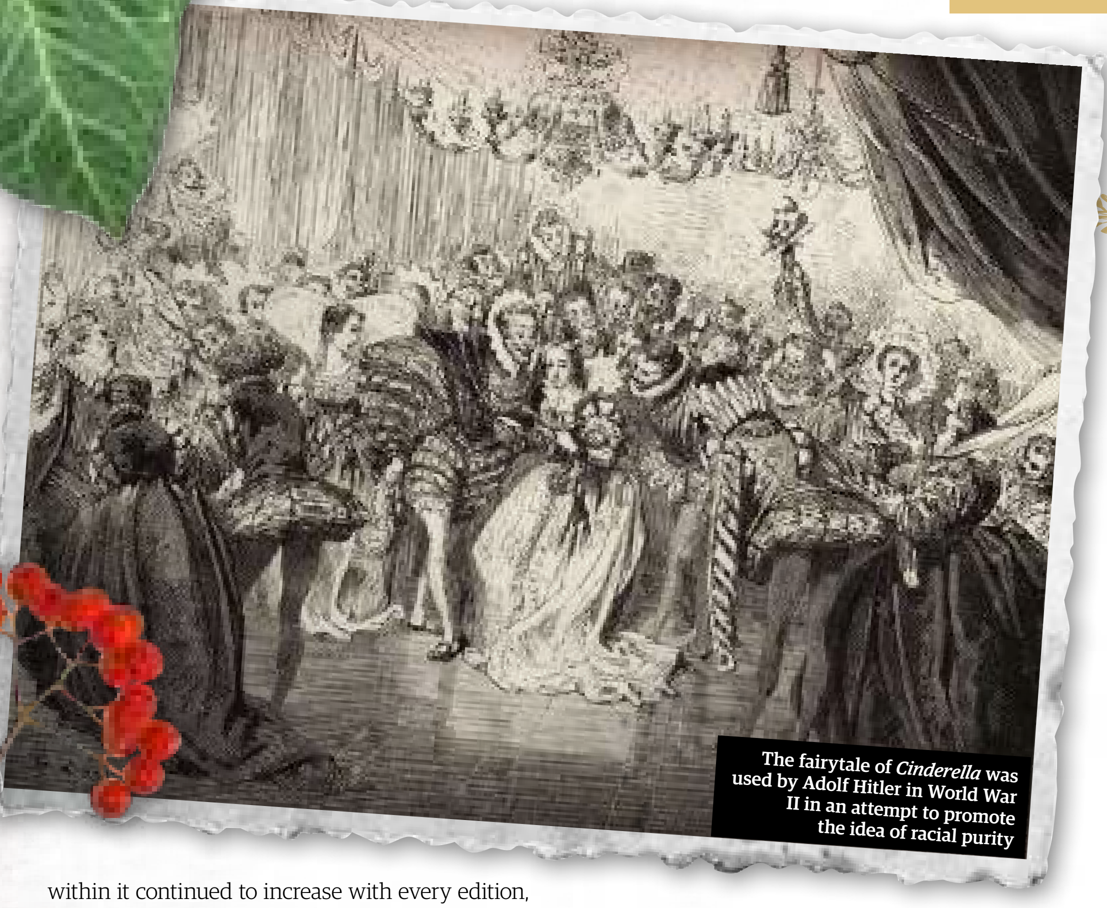
As European society began to change with the Industrial Revolution, folklore as a field of study adapted too. By the 19th century, oral folklore within the rural peasant populations persisted and, though residual, it continued to exist within the lower strata of society.

Kinder- und Hausmärchen, also known as *Grimms' Fairy Tales*, published by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm in 1812, became one of the best known collections of verbal folklore of the era. Inspired by their law professor Friedrich von Savigny, the Brothers Grimm developed a keen interest in history and philosophy and began to study medieval German literature and, through friends, they were introduced to the ideas of Johann Gottfried Herder. They agreed with him that German literature should revert back to its previous, simpler form, and devoted themselves to their studies. In 1808, Jacob was appointed court librarian to the King of Westphalia Jérôme Bonaparte, and subsequently went on to become a librarian in Kassel, Germany. But after the Brothers Grimms' mother's death, Wilhelm joined Jacob at the Kassel library, and it is there that they started collecting folktales for the book.

At the time of its first publication, *Grimms' Fairy Tales* boasted 86 tales gathered from the European peasantry, and allowed them to reach a wider audience than ever before. The number of tales



Folk traditions have always been associated with peasants, following English writer William Thoms coining the term 'folklore' in 1846



The fairytale of *Cinderella* was used by Adolf Hitler in World War II in an attempt to promote the idea of racial purity

within it continued to increase with every edition, a sign that the telling of folklore traditions was still going strong. The interest in traditions, stories, sayings and songs endured throughout the 19th century, and the work of the Brothers Grimm, among other folklorists, inspired other collectors to up their output. Like Herder's work, collections like *Grimm's Fairy Tales* also directly encouraged romantic nationalism, and the belief that the folk stories and fairytales of a certain country were representative of it. After editing several further editions of the book, the Brothers Grimm began to look at Danish and Irish folktales and Norse mythology, and published books on the subjects, alongside more books on German traditions. Their work saw that they received honorary doctorates from universities in Berlin, Marburg and Wrocław.

By the turn of the 20th century, the study of folklore had grown from a practice that caused the enlightened elite to look down upon simple peasants, into a respected and sophisticated area of study that inspired national pride. Although countless books and written studies were published about the subject in order to preserve it, the main focus remained on the oral folklore of the homogeneous peasant populations of different regions of Europe.

At the beginning of its life, the study and collection of folklore was largely an innocent movement intended to protect oral traditions and the like for as long as possible. But at the start of the 20th century, during World War I in particular, the practice was taken over by nationalistic political forces all over Europe, with Germany at the forefront. After many had found a sense of national pride and romanticism through the study of folklore, various governments released they could inspire more of the same through old traditions and tales. Words that were regularly used in German folklore like Volk (folk), Rasse (race), Stamm (tribe) and Erbe (heritage) were all but hijacked by Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party as a way to rile up German nationalists. Even a folk tale as simple as *Cinderella* became weaponised, with Hitler specifically, inaccurately, interpreting *Cinderella* as a racially pure heroine with sound racial instincts, seeking a prince of her own race.

By the end of World War II, folklorists began to take a more holistic approach to folk traditions, and a discussion about whether folklore studies should be more aligned with literature or ethnology continued. Though the study and collection of folklore has continued, the ways in which folk traditions are exchanged have developed. Oral traditions are still going strong, but many cultures, particularly those based in Europe, have begun to incorporate them into different forms, from music and dance to crafts, food and costumes. Over time, folklore has morphed into more of an event, with one of the most popular purposes of retention being to entertain an audience rather than simply honour traditions.

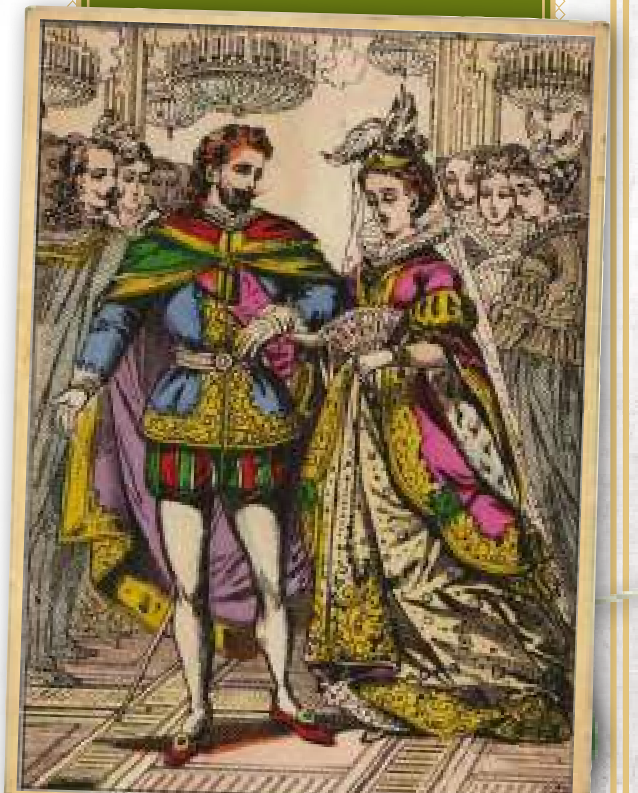
Throughout the years, a multitude of scholars and folklorists have attempted to collect folk stories to help the tradition endure. Many may have slipped through the cracks, but others still stand, untouched, and as relevant today as the first time they were told.

The Brothers Grimm's influence

After the 1812 release of *Grimms' Fairy Tales*, the Brothers Grimm rewrote and edited the book multiple times and the number of tales documented within grew larger and larger. As well as adding new stories, some were also removed, and others heavily edited. Sometimes the revisions were made after hearing new versions of stories, but sometimes they were simply sanitised, making them more suitable for a wider audience.

Though a similar tale to *Cinderella* can be found as far back as Greek mythology, in which the heroine Rhodopis had her shoe stolen by an eagle, which then dropped it in the lap of an Egyptian Pharaoh, the 17th century European version of the story resembled the one most of us know from popular culture, though it continued to evolve over time, from Charles Perrault's version to that of the Brothers Grimm. It was originally a lot darker, a story more about forced marriage than one about love prevailing over the boundaries of social status. Since their first publication, many of the Brothers Grimm's stories (which were based on folktales from all over Europe) have been altered similarly to suit the times.

The Brothers Grimm became giants of the fairytale genre, after helping to collect and preserve a number of well-known European folktales



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The lore of love

It is undeniable that love fascinates and intrigues us all. History is filled with epic love stories and folklore is no different

Written by Rebecca Greig

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LOVE POTION
USE WITH CARE!!

Love is often personified as a goddess, like Greek Aphrodite, Roman Venus and Sumerian Inanna

Seeking companionship and love is a basic human instinct. Everyone enjoys a love story and lore about love and romance has been used to explain and understand human behaviour when it comes to relationships for a long time. The language of love is universal, but the world is full of different customs, tales and magical legends about this powerful emotion.

We might now associate Valentine's Day with cards, flowers and a lucrative gift industry, but the idea behind the day of romance originated from folklore centuries old. There are many theories however as to where it might have originally come from. It is said by some that the day originated as a Western feast held to celebrate two saints named Valentinus. However, legend has it that when Saint Valentine of Rome was imprisoned before being executed he wrote a letter to a wealthy Roman girl that he'd healed and signed it with "Your Valentine". It wasn't until the 14th century, however, that the day was associated with romance. Then in 18th century England it continued its transformation into a day of gifts, flowers and symbols of love as we know it today. Valentine's Day is an interesting example of how lore has changed and developed over time and come to be accepted. Not many of us will question the true origins of the day, but we continue to celebrate it nonetheless.

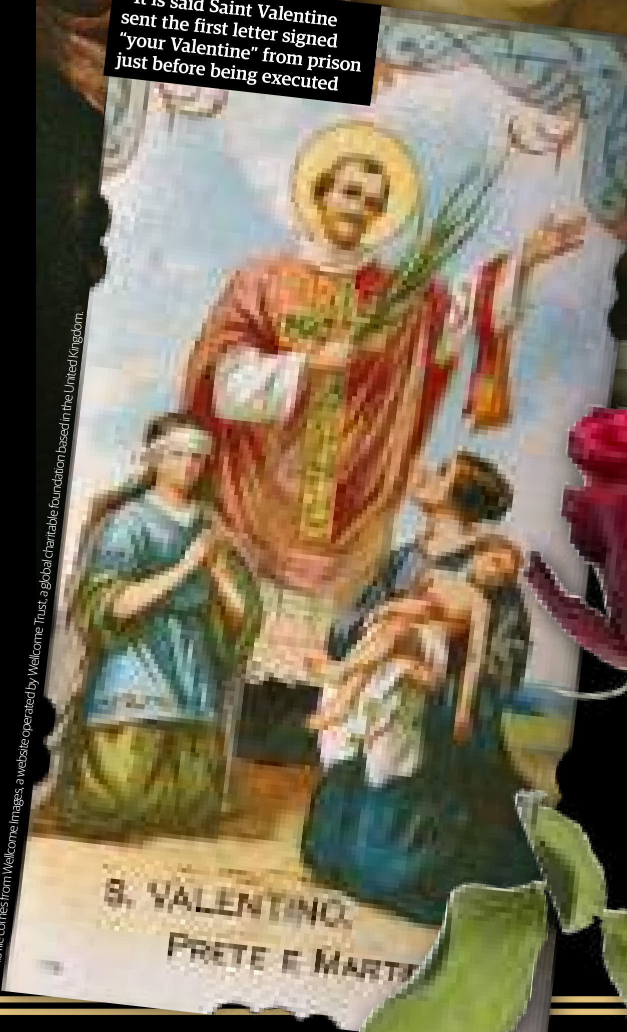
Themes of love pop up the folklore of various cultures. One such Western European story is the story of *The Frog Prince* – there are other variations of this like the Finnish tale *The Mouse Bride*. The tales involve someone seeking a spouse but they can only find a small animal. After showing kindness and love towards the creature the main characters are rewarded when the animal transforms back into their human form and reveals that their animal form was caused by a curse, which trule love has now broken.

Love spells crop up commonly in folk magic. Love is a desirable and powerful emotion both to feel and receive, so it is no wonder there are many spells to encourage and entice it. Honey is a common love spell ingredient used in folk traditions around the world – particularly in voodoo practice. Its purpose is to sweeten someone's feelings towards you.

All around the world there are traditions and beliefs associated with love. The Bridge of Sighs in Venice is one of Italy's many sights associated with love. Local legend says that if lovers kiss beneath it at sunset, as the bells of St Mark's are ringing, they will be guaranteed eternal love.

The red thread of fate or destiny is an ancient Chinese legend, also found in Japanese culture. It is believed that the gods tie an invisible red string around the ankles (or little fingers) of two people destined to be soulmates. Distance between the soulmates, and circumstances, don't matter as it is believed that these two people will be together eventually. The cord can stretch and tangle but will never break. If you believe the legend then you are already connected to your soulmate, and it is just a matter of waiting for the thread to lead you to them.

It is said Saint Valentine sent the first letter signed "your Valentine" from prison just before being executed



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There are many stories about men being trapped in a small creature's form only to be released by true love

“Love is like a baby: it needs to be treated tenderly”

Congolese saying

“Love kills with golden arrows”

Spanish proverb

“Soul meets soul on lovers' lips”

Percy Bysshe Shelley

While Valentine's Day is associated with love today, traditionally St Agnes' Eve, Midsummer Eve and Halloween were the times to divine who your true love was. Folk rituals include using dew, apple peel, mirrors, herbs and dreams to reveal the name, face or initials of one's beloved.

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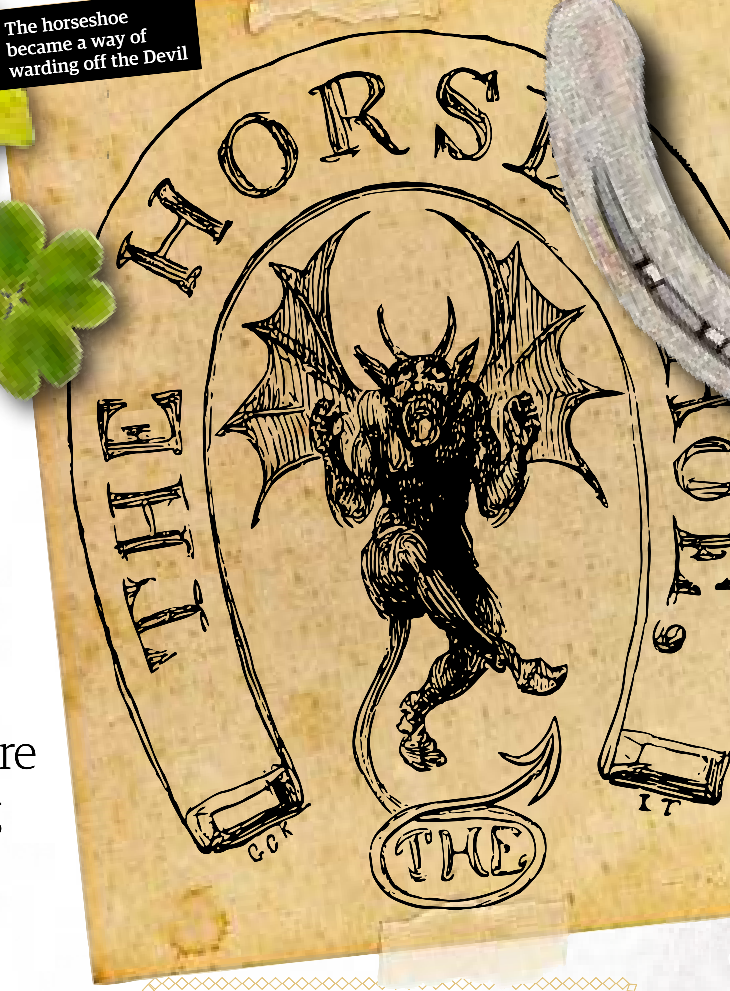
Luck of the lore

Superstition and luck feature in many folklore traditions, with many talismans still being prominent symbols even today

Written by Rebecca Greig


The horseshoe became a way of warding off the Devil

Lore surrounding luck, both good and bad, exists because it is a natural human need to seek assurances, comfort, safety and fortune. It is reassuring to believe that if one action happens there is a known outcome. It gives us hope as well as guidance.

Common symbols of luck that crop up in many cultures are horseshoes, rabbit's feet and four-leaf clovers. A horseshoe was seen as a practical device to protect a horse's feet and the utility of the iron shoe helped it to become a talisman for the preservation of buildings and other premises from witches and fiends. There are various theories about horseshoe; it is believed the good luck beliefs surrounding them date back to the story of a blacksmith named Dunstan, who later became the Archbishop of Canterbury. St Dunstan had several folkloric encounters with the Devil, once tweaking him by the nose with his blacksmith's tongs; on this occasion the Devil was threatening to knock down a village's new houses when the saint appeared and began to remonstrate with him. Subsequently the Devil promised to never enter anywhere with a horseshoe hung over the door. Other lore states that a horseshoe's shape is close to that of a crescent moon, which gives it the ability to ward off the evil eye.

There are also many different theories on the way in which the horseshoe should be hung. Some cultures believe hanging it upwards (in a U shape) helps to retain the luck and powers it has, and hanging it upside down causes the powers to fall away. However, others believe the upside-down position means that the luck, protective powers and good fortune fall out of the horseshoe and down upon you and your home.

The lucky rabbit's foot can be traced back to multiple cultures around the world, although it most likely dates back to Celtic peoples in around 600 BCE. Some say the luck was attributed to a specific creature or to the way that it was killed. According to North American tales, the lucky foot must be the hind left foot of the rabbit and the rabbit must have been either shot or found in a cemetery. Some say it had to be taken at Full Moon, while others argue that it had to be a New Moon, a rainy Friday, or that the foot has to be taken from a live animal!

Sailors had many superstitions surrounding luck, which were based mainly on the inherent risks related to sailing. Friday is seen as an unlucky day in some cultures, and it is a sailing superstition that it is unlucky to begin a voyage on a Friday. British and Irish sailors adopted the tradition of having a black ship's cat because it was believed to bring them good luck. There is some logic in this belief, as it was likely that the cat would kill any rodents that might have eaten their food supplies or chewed on important ropes.

If you find a coin in the street, it's apparently good luck to spit on it before pocketing it!

Hagstones are pebbles that have had a hole worn into them naturally – they're usually found on the beach. Hanging one up near your front door is supposed to encourage good luck and ward off bad.

The Japanese maneki neko or lucky cat is a cute ornament with a moving arm. Based on an ancient legend, it's thought that the cheerful little cat waves good luck into the home.

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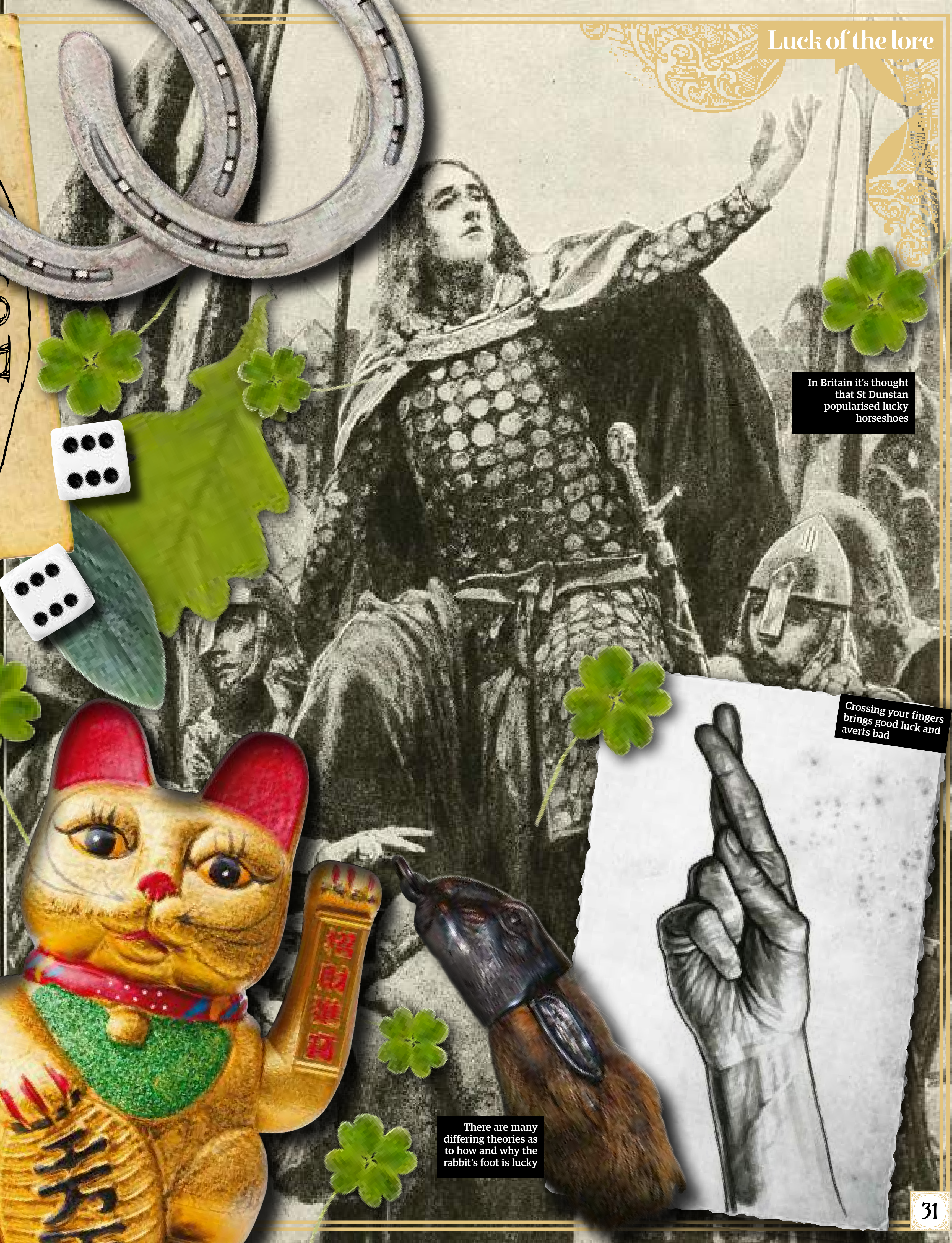


In Britain it's thought that St Dunstan popularised lucky horseshoes

Crossing your fingers brings good luck and averts bad

There are many differing theories as to how and why the rabbit's foot is lucky

Exploring world folklore

The 18th and 19th century demand for exotic fashions came about when the Western world was on the edge of change. The collection of folk and fairytales illustrates this

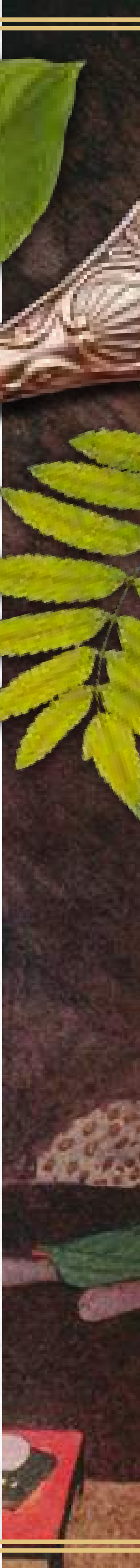
Written by Rebecca Lewry-Gray

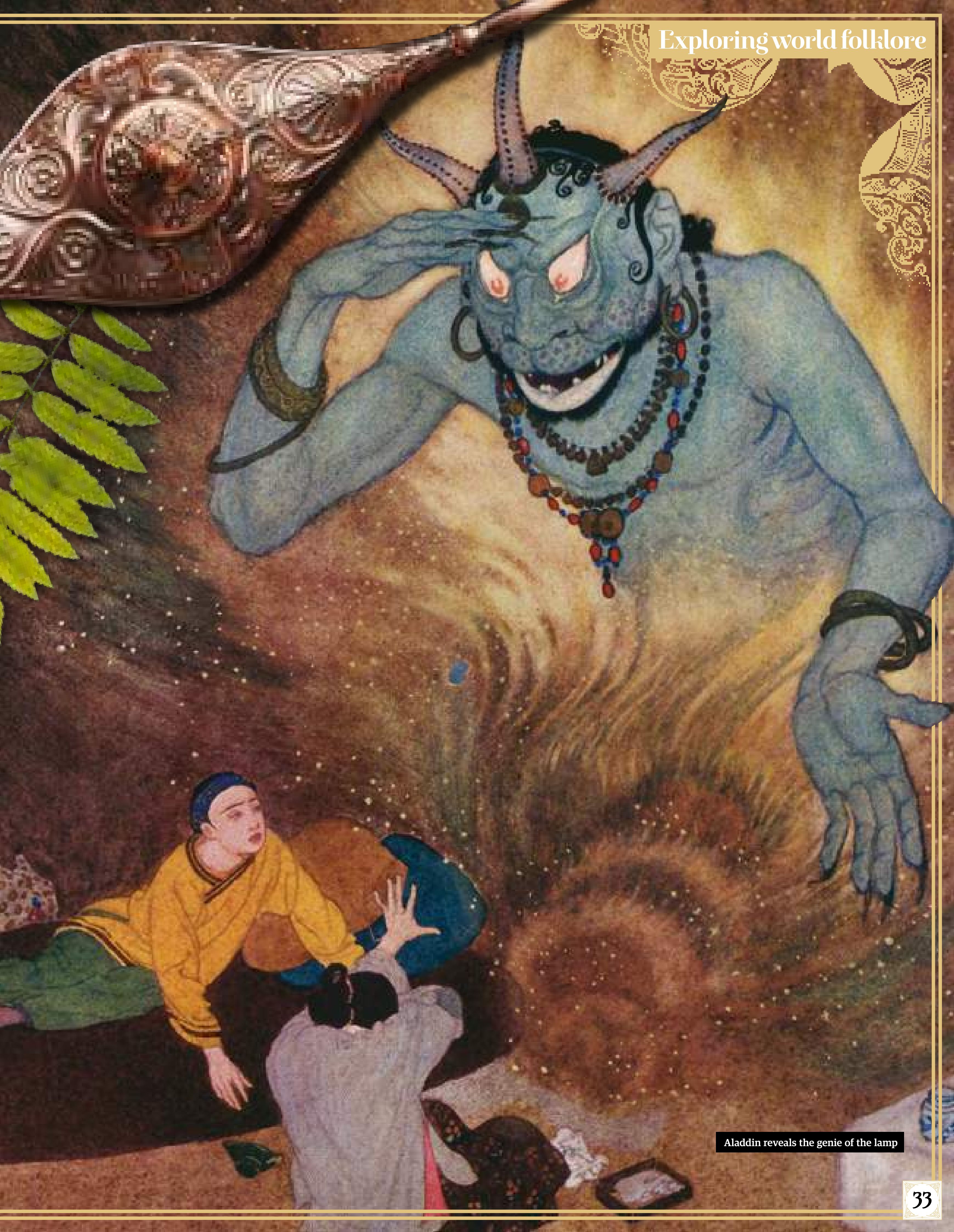
Western folklorists rapidly adopted world folklore into collections of folk and fairytales during the 19th century. It was at this time that Orientalism took hold of the arts in the West. Exotic, Eastern styles were popular in fine art, furniture, literature and folklore. However, Orientalism was a dismissive term at the time and our modern use of it today is pejorative, although for different reasons. It has an undercurrent of the inaccurate, old-fashioned idea that non-Western culture is static and underdeveloped, and can therefore be studied easily, and simply reproduced. The implication was that Western society, and by extension its folklore, was superior to that of other cultures.

French archaeologist Antoine Galland was the first European translator of *The 1001 Nights*. He was employed by the French East India Company to collect curios for the cabinet of the Minister of Finance under King Louis XIV. Galland bought a manuscript of the tale of *Sinbad The Sailor* in the 1690s, and in 1701 translated it into French. It was hugely successful, and he then embarked on a translation of a 14th century Syrian manuscript of *The 1001 Nights*. The success of the tales was, in part due to the fashion for fairytales at the time.

Galland took great liberties in translating the tales. All the poetry and many of the erotic scenes were cut, in order to conform to European trends. As this was the first Western translation, the Western view of Syrian and (by extension) Middle Eastern folklore was wholly shaped by Galland, and it can be argued that it still is today.

The stories of *Aladdin* and *Ali Baba* were not part of the original work, which raises questions of authenticity. Galland refers to a Syrian Christian storyteller named Hanna Diab who told these stories to him. Interestingly, no written Arabic edition of either story occurs until after Galland's





Aladdin reveals the genie of the lamp

translation. Many scholars view these two stories as a creation of Galland.

Aladdin, *Sinbad* and *Ali Baba* have been absorbed into Western culture as icons. Their motifs and stock character set-up is easily recognisable to children today and the stories are treasured. There is little evidence to show that *The 1001 Nights* was thought of highly in the medieval Arab world because fiction was not valued as a high art.

Western perception of these stories moves from the exotic and fashionable to as familiar and 'safe' as local lore through the stories' integration into storytelling tradition. Today, the story of *Aladdin* is often performed for British children in Christmas pantomimes and theatre performances.

This can raise questions about cultural appropriation, which is taking a traditional practice or piece of folklore from a marginalised group and turning it into something that benefits the dominant group, erasing its origins and often its original meaning. International lives are rife with non-Western folklore.

Many First Nations and Native American ceremonies use 'smudge sticks' and it has since become fashionable in some corners of Western society to burn sage, a practice that imitates these sacred rituals.

We also use the lotus position in meditation. During British colonisation of India, yogic practices were violently suppressed, yet subsequent trends in Western athletics took many of the physical elements of yoga. These examples could be viewed as a form of cultural exchange, but should always be studied in the context of power dynamics too.

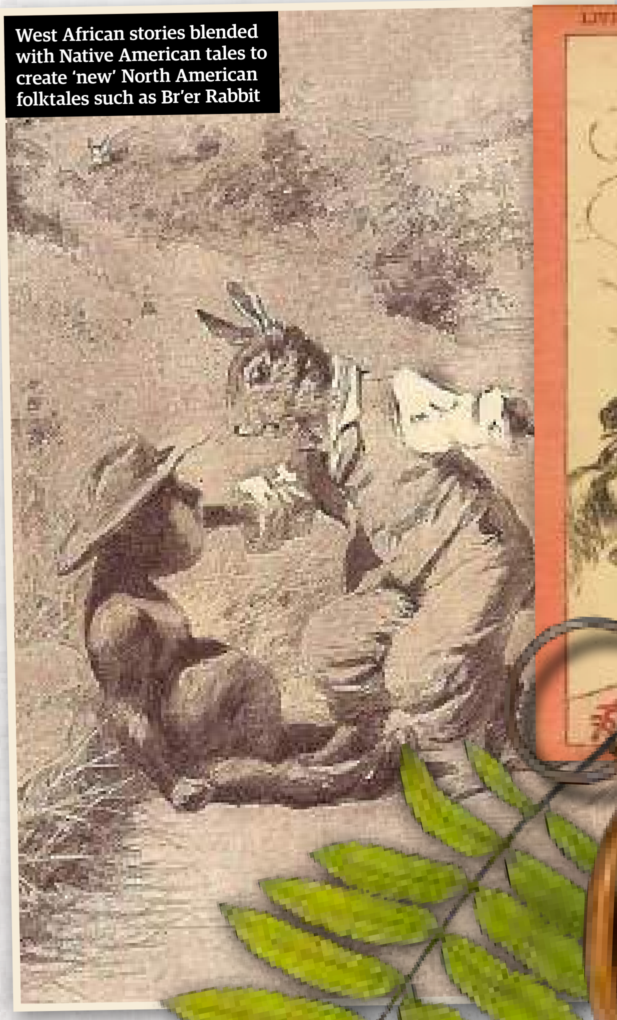
The 19th century fashion for new exotic, imaginative and wonderful worlds came about when the Western world was on the edge of change. The traditional structures of the West were being deconstructed and changed by revolutions and industrialisation. The study and collection of world folklore and the attention lavished on 'correct' (read 'Western') forms of folklore was used as a method to educate subjugated peoples in the 'right' way to live, with an emphasis on Western orderliness.

> Richard Carnac Temple joined the Folklore Society in 1885 and published a paper called *The Science of Folk-lore* in 1886

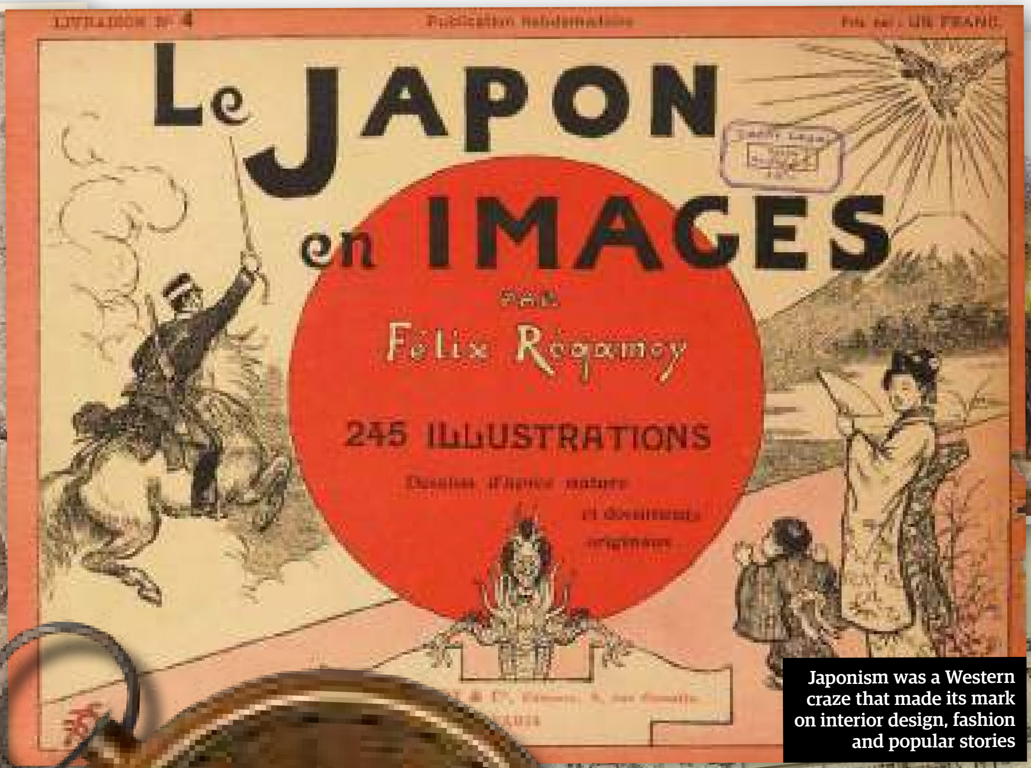
Many non-Western folktales were bowdlerised. Works were censored, and 'offensive' passages were removed to protect the sensibilities of the time. Unabridged versions of *The 1001 Nights* were created by John Payne (1882) and Sir Richard Frances Burton (1885). These were private editions, available by subscription only in order to avoid strict Victorian laws on obscene material. Burton's work, in particular, has been criticised for an almost "obsessive focus on sexuality" (Ulrich Marzolph and Richard Van Leeuwen *The Arabian Nights Encyclopaedia*, 2004) as he added footnotes and appendices on Oriental sexual mores. This focus on titillation and the exotic can show us how duplicitous Victorian collectors could be, despite the veneer of respectability.

Oriental studies also took hold during the 19th century; many collections of folklore were undertaken by British officers of the East India Company and other colonial administrators. This folkloric work had a decidedly imperial position and outlook.

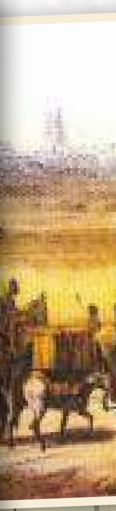
British military and civil officer in colonial India, Richard Carnac Temple (1850-1931), viewed the



West African stories blended with Native American tales to create 'new' North American folktales such as Br'er Rabbit



Japonism was a Western craze that made its mark on interior design, fashion and popular stories



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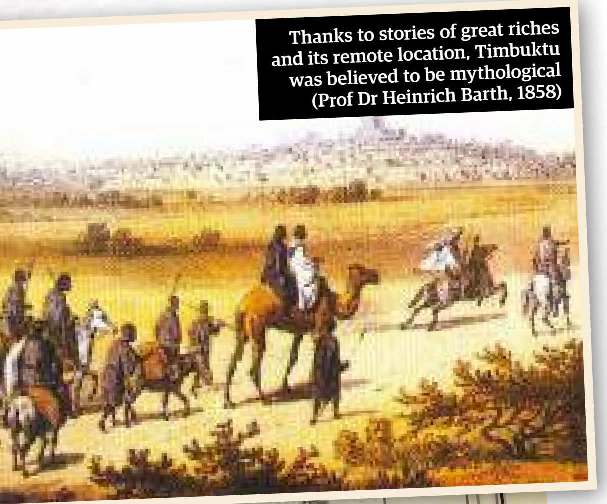
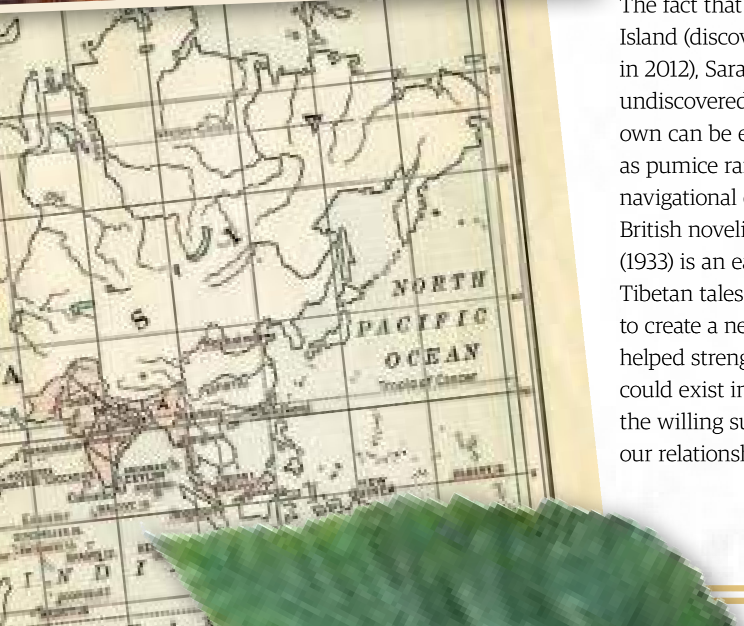
collection of folklore as a tool that “will enhance our influence over the natives and render our intercourse with them more easy and interesting”.

Similarly, British Governor (and later Premier) of New Zealand, Sir George Grey, used the collection of folklore to work with native Maori, who were hostile to the invading force. Grey found that simply learning native languages was insufficient to understand the way the community worked. He then studied their mythology and folktales, which were an integral part of communication, in order conduct successful negotiations. Other government officials and missionaries made similar efforts to open lines of communication that benefited them and ostensibly the native community too.

The view was that the peoples being ruled should be understood, in order to rule them more efficiently. This work was often undertaken by wives of officers and missionaries, sometimes out of sheer boredom. Mary Frere, daughter of the governor of Bombay, undertook the first collection of Indian folk narrative from oral tradition by asking her nursemaid Anna Liberata de Souza (who was Indian Lingayat) for a fairytale. This collection is unrefined and patronising, focusing on de Souza’s broken English, and refers to the narrator’s style on a number of occasions.


Thanks to stories of great riches and its remote location, Timbuktu was believed to be mythological (Prof Dr Heinrich Barth, 1858)



Colonial collecting was not just restricted to Asia. West African mythology was also altered by colonisation and, undeniably, by the transatlantic slave trade. People were forcibly migrated from West Africa to the New World, and with them their lore and myths were transplanted to Caribbean, Cuban, Brazilian, and North American mythology.

The Bantu-speaking people of south and central Africa brought the character of Br’er Rabbit, who is, even today, a North American folk hero. The folklore of Br’er Rabbit has close parallels with many Native American tales; rabbit tricksters feature in both traditions and the two have combined in many parts of the USA.

These ‘new’ and blended myths cannot be studied outside of their historical context of slavery. The Jamaican tradition of Anansi (spider storyteller) tales is purely due to the sheer concentration of enslaved Asante people.

Japan ended the isolationist Edo period (1603-1868) in 1853, and the West gained a new partner for trade. Japonism, like Orientalism before it, became all the rage. Japanese art and culture was studied and cultural anthropologists explored this strange new world. Later, writers such as Lafcadio Hearn fully submersed themselves in it.

Western academics, and by extension lore consumers, were sometimes confused by folklore and truth. As with many of Grimm’s fairytales, there were debates over what was ‘real’. The Malian trade centre of Timbuktu was described by 16th century writer Leo Africanus in stories of great riches, which tapped into colonial greed. Travellers wished to visit the inaccessible city on the edge of the Sahara desert, but when they arrived it was not the city Africanus described. Many travellers believed that the ‘true’ Timbuktu had mysteriously disappeared. And this continues today; in a 2006 survey that was undertaken of 150 young Britons, 66 per cent believed that it was a mythical place.

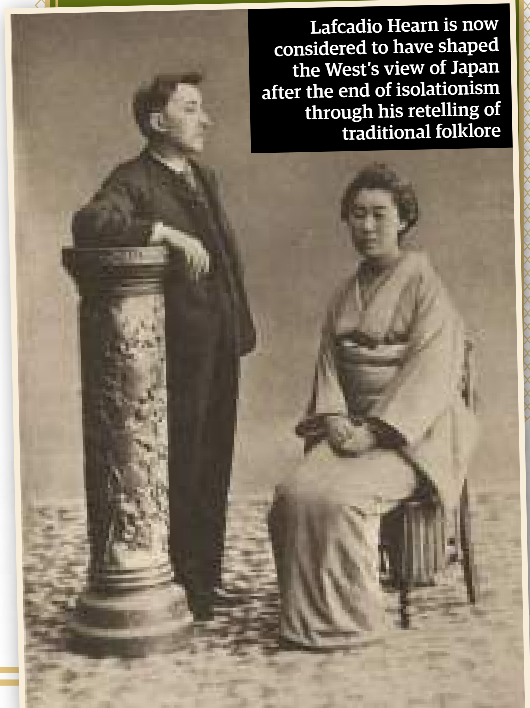
Unlike Timbuktu, there are a number of locations that have been mythologised to such an extent that their non-existence has to be proved. The fact that phantom islands such as Sandy Island (discovered in 1776 and undiscovered in 2012), Sarah Ann Island (discovered 1858, undiscovered 1937) have taken on lives of their own can be explained away by phenomena such as pumice rafts from underwater volcanoes or navigational errors. Shangri-la, a fictional place in British novelist James Hilton’s work *Lost Horizon* (1933) is an earthly paradise. Hilton used existing Tibetan tales, such as the concept of Shambhala, to create a new Orientalist myth. A 1937 film helped strengthen the fantasy that such a place could exist in the ‘mysterious east’ and encourage the willing suspension of disbelief that’s seen in our relationship to so many folktales.

Lafcadio Hearn
aka
Koizumi Yakumo
1850-1904

Writer Lafcadio Hearn was born in Greece in 1850. Abandoned by his family, he moved to the US to start a new life. Working on a newspaper in Cincinnati he encountered the world of the African-American community, and after a short-lived marriage to an African-American woman, Alethea Foley, he moved from Ohio to New Orleans. Hearn wrote extensively on the Creole population; collecting recipes and proverbs as well as voodoo. Hearn was partly responsible for the popular image of New Orleans as an exotic, mysterious place.

Hearn then moved to Japan, where his most celebrated work was undertaken. He collected Japanese ghost stories in *Kwaidan*, transcribing and adapting them for Western audiences. Hearn fully embraced Japan, taking on a Japanese name, Koizumi Yakumo, when he married a woman from a traditional samurai family. While Hearn’s work can seem old-fashioned in the way he exoticises the cultures he writes about, his meticulous records of cultural practices, notably Creole melodies in *American Writings*, has enormous value. He was also one of the few writers to describe pre-industrial Japan at a time of great flux.

The influence of the women in Hearn’s life cannot be understated when it comes to his folk work; his Irish nurse had a rich tradition of oral fairytales and ghost stories. He described his first wife as possessing “...naturally a wonderful wealth of verbal description”. His second wife, Koizumi Setsu, told him many of the famous tales that he retold in *Kwaidan*.


Lafcadio Hearn is now considered to have shaped the West’s view of Japan after the end of isolationism through his retelling of traditional folklore

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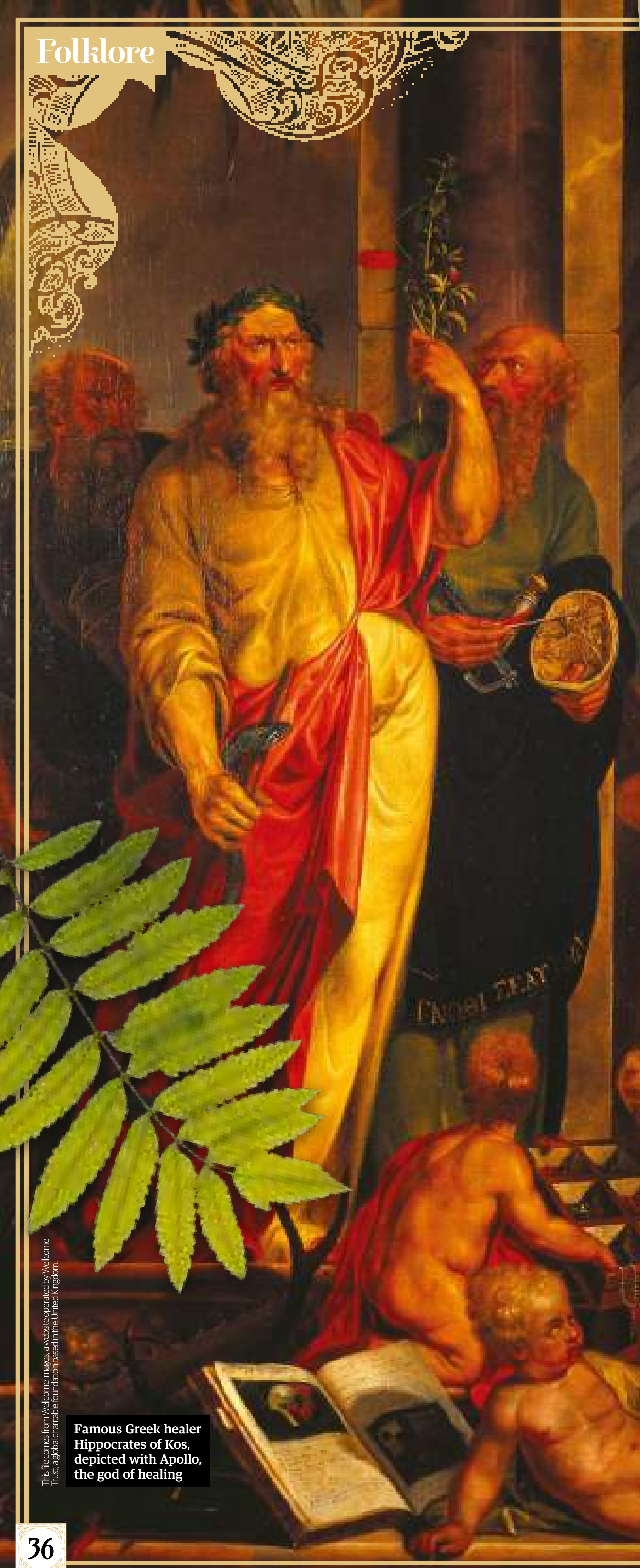

Famous Greek healer Hippocrates of Kos, depicted with Apollo, the god of healing

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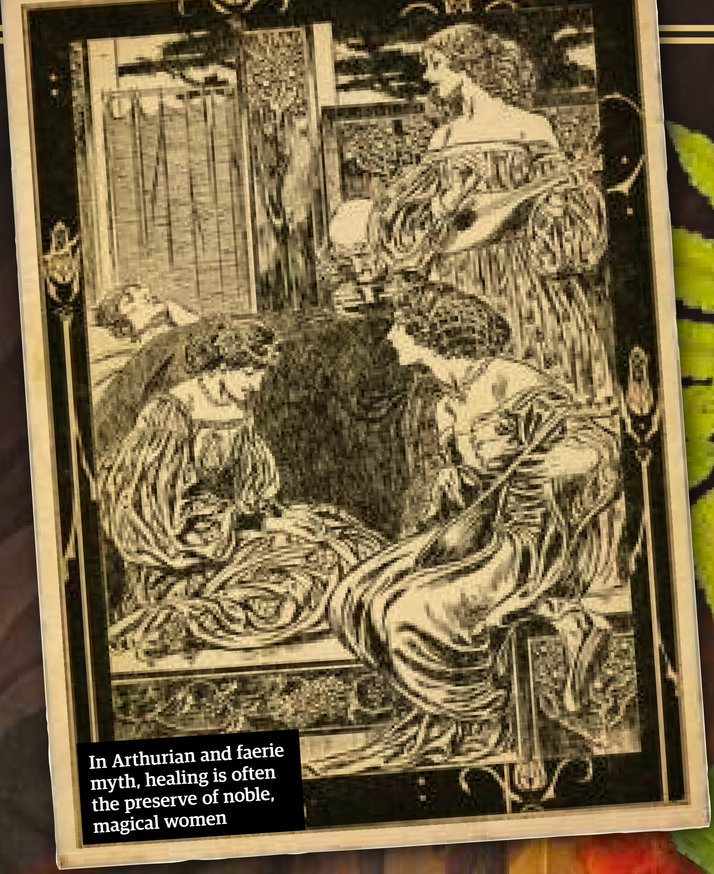


In Arthurian and faerie myth, healing is often the preserve of noble, magical women

Apothecaries were proto-pharmacists, often female, who prepared and dispensed herbal and chemical remedies. The trade began in around 2600 BCE in Babylon and was still extant in the early 20th century, when it was finally supplanted by modern medicine

Staying healthy

In the days before modern medical science, folk remedies ranged from spells and charms to effective herbal remedies we're rediscovering today

Written by Rebecca Greig

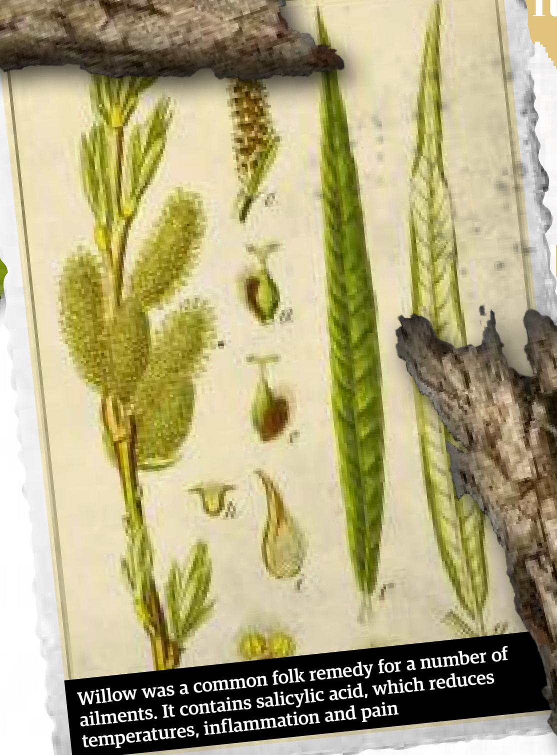
When healthcare and medicine was not accessible to all, people had to create their own theories and cures. These would have then been passed on through families and communities to eventually form beliefs that came to be relied upon. Health beliefs and myths were then adopted as if they were proper medical diagnoses. Health lore often seems to be purely based on superstition, but the occasional ancient piece of advice can seem a bit more plausible when today's research is taken into account.

The ancient Greeks thought health was affected by a number of different things, including gender, social class, location, diet, beliefs, and more. Early on it was thought that illness was a divine punishment and healing was a gift from the gods. Healing was often treated as a supernatural phenomenon caused by invoking a god's will using special ceremonies and rituals to call on the powers of deities.

The hot-cold theory crops up often in folklore. In Asia, maintaining a balance of hot and cold in the body is considered important. In Chinese culture, fried food, beef, chillies and peppers are considered to be 'hot' foods while soy beans, lettuce and oranges are seen as 'cold'. According to traditional Chinese belief, an imbalance of hot and cold foods will lead to illness.

A common proverb relating to health, and still used frequently today, is "An apple a day keeps the doctor away." The proverb is said to be Welsh in origin and was first recorded as being said in 1860 in Pembrokeshire. The original wording of the phrase was "Eat an apple on going to bed, and you'll keep the doctor from earning his bread".

"Healing was often treated as a supernatural phenomenon"



Willow was a common folk remedy for a number of ailments. It contains salicylic acid, which reduces temperatures, inflammation and pain

"Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise"

American saying

"An apple a day keeps the doctor away"

Welsh proverb

"Physician, heal thyself"

The Gospel of Luke

"Feed a cold and starve a fever"

English adage

Willow bark has been used a remedy since ancient times. It contains salicylic acid, which lowers fevers, reduces inflammation, soothes pain, prevents blood clots and is an effective topical solution for acne. In the 19th century, chemists began experimenting with it. The result was the commonly used drug aspirin.

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Hearth and home

Traditional witch dolls were placed above the hearth to act as protection

The hearth was the true heart of the home, providing warmth, food and protection from many things

Written by Rebecca Greig

Lore about the home is largely about protection and survival. The hearth in ancient times was seen as the most sacred place in the home.

There are household deities that crop up in many folktales around the world; these spirits tend to protect the home, a member of the household or the hearth. The hearth goddess can be found in both Norse and Greek lore. The hearth features predominantly because in many ancient cultures the hearth was very much the centre of the home. It was the provider of heat for cooking meals, warmth throughout the winter, and often the main gathering place in the household, much like the modern-day kitchen is today.

The hearth was where the fire burned and it is this important element that features in many beliefs. The fire in the house was never to be allowed to die and it would be bad luck should a banked fire go out completely during the night. Hot coals would be borrowed from neighbours to rectify the misfortune but if the coals died while being transported then the family would be said to have an unlucky future ahead.

Today the fire still remains as an integral part of the home both for its practical purposes and also its spiritual connotations. The chimney is regarded by some as the magical entrance to the home: Father Christmas typically enters the house via it. In some cultures people often use plants to protect themselves. Olive branches hung on the chimney or pine needles scattered in it are said to protect against lightning strikes.

Other superstitions relating to the fire and hearth in the home include the idea that a jar of salt placed on the hearth can help to calm periods of arguments and tension, and a pinch thrown into the flames will cleanse and bless the home. According to myth, three circles drawn on the hearth in white chalk will ban evil from entering, and according to some folklore a fire must have thirteen sticks in it in order to burn properly.

The fire in the home also plays an important role in spell-making too. The type of wood that you choose to burn can have effects on your spells. Oak should be burned for healing spells, while ash logs encourage energy, and pine brings money into the home.

Other quirky beliefs involve pets being walked around the hearth three times to make sure they don't run away. New brides would throw coins into the hearthfire before their wedding supper, and new husbands, like pets, would walk around it three times to bond them with the hearth and the home.

"A hundred men may make an encampment, but it takes a woman to make a home"

Chinese proverb

"Home is where the heart is"

Pliny the Elder

"An Englishman's home is his castle"

Traditional English saying

In ancient Rome, Vesta was the goddess of the hearth, home and family. She was rarely depicted in human form, as she was considered to manifest in the flames of the hearthfire - even her temples had a hearth rather than a statue of the goddess. Her virgin priestesses were expected to keep this sacred flame alight at all times.

Walking pets and husbands around the hearth three times was said to bring better fortunes

The hearth represents the true heartbeat of the home

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Folklore re-evaluated

The 20th century brought about massive changes in folklore studies. Functionalist, structuralist, psychoanalytic and feminist interpretations have all been undertaken

Written by Rebecca Lewry-Gray

The importance of folklore and folklore studies was recognised globally by UNESCO in 1982. 'Folk' used to mean rural peasants, illiterate but with a strong cultural oral tradition. With industrialisation this definition had to change to a modern definition; folk: a social group with shared identity and distinctive traditions. Folk study has also broadened out, from rural communities to national communities and then to digital communities.

Folk artefacts can be anything from folktales to folk songs and folk art. However, the transmission of these artefacts is key. This needs to be done anonymously: there is no named ownership of an artefact, unlike in 'high' culture in which the creator retains ownership.

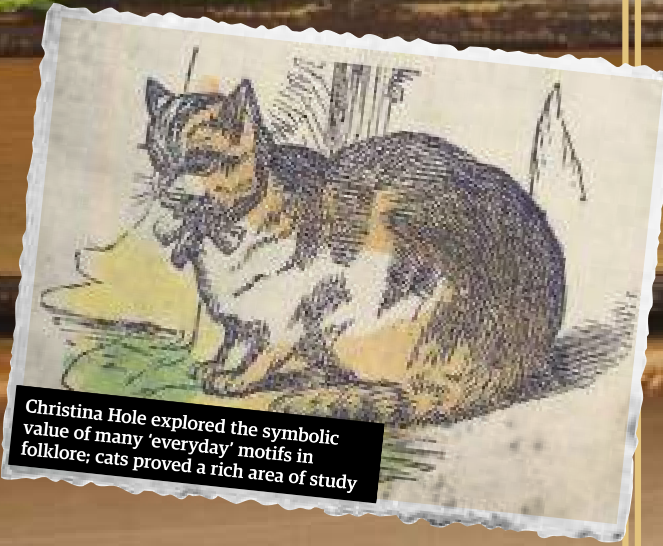
The term 'folkloristics' is a mouthful and can seem needlessly academic. In short, folkloristics is the study of folklore. 'Folklore' itself was adopted by writer William Thoms to replace 'popular antiquities' in 1846. There has been much argument over the need for the label 'folkloristics', which was adopted to differentiate the field of study from its object, formalising the area of academia. Interestingly, folklore studies uses many of the same models as linguistic studies and the nouns of the academic came before the title of study in both cases (Linguist/linguistics and folklorist/folkloristics).

When identifying folklore, especially more modern works, we must remember that it is not the same as popular culture. Popular culture is often mass-produced and disappears quickly. Popular culture can also collide with what American folklorist Richard Dorson labelled 'fakelore': manufactured folklore made to seem authentic, for example, the disneyfication of folktales and associated products. Dorson also contributed the term 'urban legend' in 1968, "a story that never happened told for true", which could send us down another branch of folklore study entirely!

From the mid-1930s, and going from strength to strength after World War II, folklore was now a regarded academic subject. Many post-WWII collectors were women ranging from gifted amateurs to academics in their own right.

Christina Hole was a highly regarded amateur folklore collector and editor. While working for the

Folklorists originally aimed to preserve archaic customs and folk beliefs in order to trace the social history of cultures



Christina Hole explored the symbolic value of many 'everyday' motifs in folklore; cats proved a rich area of study

After World War II, folklorists started re-evaluating the idea that folklore was old-fashioned, rustic and out of date

UK's Conservative party in the early 20th century she travelled around homes and realised that various ancient beliefs were still alive in the 20th century. She collected works of domestic folklore, including cat, witch and ghost based-lore. As she was not out to collect stories and folklore, she found that people would talk to her easily and readily. Her common-sense collections of lore were published between 1937-75, and she was a member of the Folklore Society council.

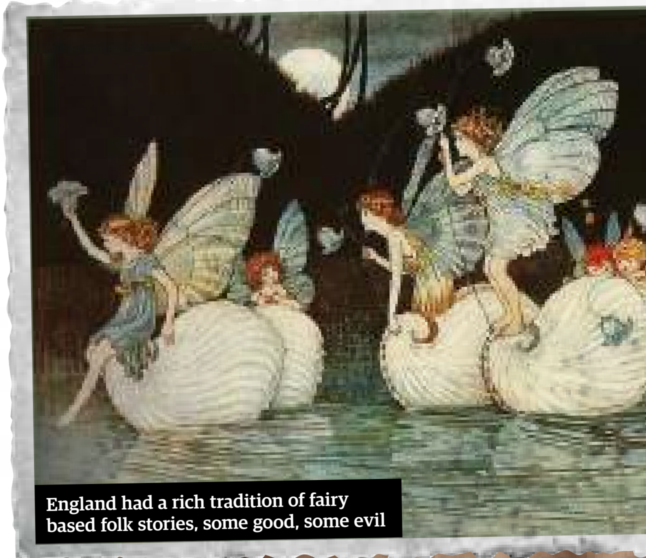
Folklorist KM Briggs wrote on Hole's retirement that she was one of the last "cultured 19th century ladies who never went to college". Oxford-educated academic Briggs was also an authority on folklore in Britain. Her work focused mainly on fairies and their associated kin; unfortunately many of her works were published before it was known that the Cottingley Fairy photographs were fakes, so many works seem rather naïve now with that borne in mind.

Folklore doesn't mean ancient motifs or storytelling around a fire anymore. Modern folklorists recognise that modern folklore plays with tradition and variation. We recognise and unconsciously understand reoccurring folk motifs from childhood. We see *Cinderella* stories, for example, and know where the story will go and what beats the tale will hit. We can see the influence of folklore on modern works such as *Star Wars*. Creator George Lucas credits Joseph Campbell (Professor of Literature at Sarah Lawrence College) with influencing *Star Wars* through comparative mythology. The Hero's Journey mythology that Campbell discussed exhaustively in his work is evident in all episodes of *Star Wars*.

When talking about the folklore of modern tribes we cannot discount the internet community, as disparate as it may seem. The term 'meme', popularised by Richard Dawkins, refers to an idea, behaviour or style that spreads through culture, person to person, carrying cultural ideas or practices. It may seem bizarre, but the American Folklife Center is archiving GIFS, images and archives of websites in order to preserve a database of this side of modern folklore.

Professor Shira Chess points to the Slender Man as a direct link from ancient folklore about fairies to modern memes. The Slender Man's 'success' in moving outside of message boards is due to its collaborative nature: storytellers can add their own inspiration, and the ownership of this character is shared. For many there is also the willing suspension of disbelief when enjoying these stories; we know exactly which message board the story came from, but it's still fun to be frightened. There is, however, a darker side to the mythos, as seen in 2014's so-called 'Slender Man stabbing', when two mentally ill girls attacked a classmate in

British folklorist Katherine Mary Briggs wrote the four volume *A Dictionary of British Folk-Tales in the English Language*



England had a rich tradition of fairy based folk stories, some good, some evil

KM Briggs 1898-1980

Critics have attributed Briggs' interest in the British tradition of storytelling, folktales and fairies as an influence from her father, who was an artist and storyteller. Briggs further refined this interest as a Brownie and Girl Guide and later with acting, writing and directing in an amateur touring company. Briggs also wrote works of children's fiction, *The Legend of Maiden-Hair* (1915) *Hobberdy Dick* (1955) and *Kate Crackernuts* (1963). Despite her work in children's fiction Briggs' writes in a serious fashion, neither degrading nor mythologising fairy and folktales. Since 1982, two years after her death, the Folklore Society has awarded an annual book prize in Briggs' honour. This award is intended to encourage the study of folklore, improve the standard of folklore publications and establish the Folklore Society as an authority of excellence.

Brigg's work on British folktales were authoritative. She used her skills as a storyteller to revive interest in traditional tales

William Thoms is credited with originating the term 'folklore' and was fond of the works of the Brothers Grimm

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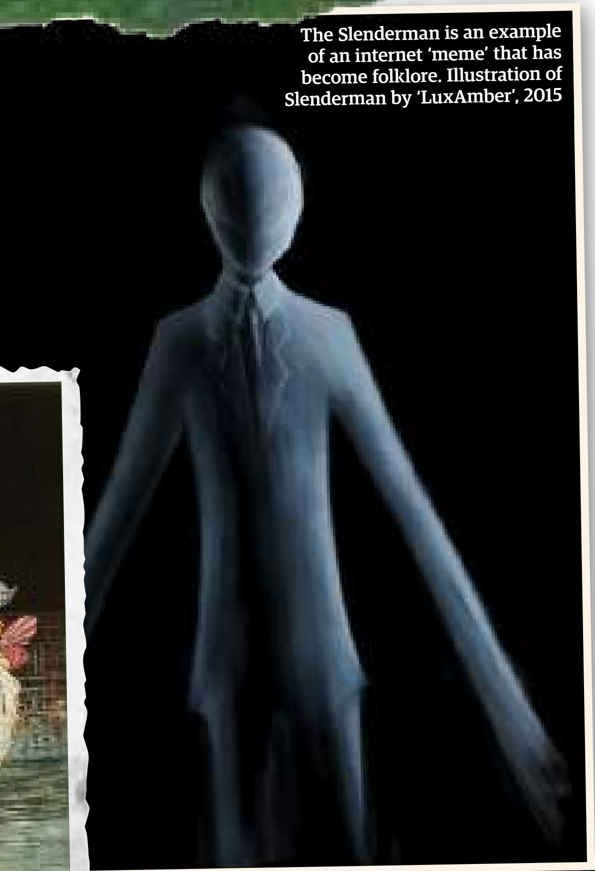

The Slenderman is an example of an internet 'meme' that has become folklore. Illustration of Slenderman by 'LuxAmber', 2015

the mistaken belief that this would endear them to the fictional character.

The internet has also aided folklore research. In researching jokes after 9/11, folklorist Bill Ellis used message boards as a time machine, to log not only the successful jokes about the subject, but also the ones that did not survive. Interestingly, the anonymity of the internet allows the joke teller to distance themselves from any risk of social retaliation, also removing the ownership, as is the case with most folklore.

Cybernetics is a transdisciplinary approach in looking at communication. Academics look at the system that generates change in the environment and how this change is reflected in the feedback and so on in a closed signalling loop. In investigating these functions and processes of systems, folklorists can understand how folklore practices maintain themselves on a closed loop (closed social group). Adding new elements is a way to change the system, like a joke you've heard a number of times being retold.

Second-order cyberneticists recognise that by being part of the system that is being studied, one is unconsciously influencing it. When presenting a folktale to an outsider the storyteller is influenced by the audience. There are also increased social risks in sharing.

By combining folkloristics and morphology (the study of form and structure) we end up with folkloristic morphology; the structure of folklore and fairytales.

Many folklorists use structuralist theory in order to uncover the logic in lore. The foundation of structuralism is a 'sign', which is made up of a signifier (an object, idea or motif) and what it signifies (its culturally agreed meaning). Signs can be studied and understood in contrast to other signs, revealing patterns that we recognise. Vladimir Propp presented a system of describing folktales by following the patterns of events in a story, showing the tale structure. These rules structure the whole, and many kinds of folktale share common features. Focusing on the structure alone allows folklorists to hone in on the similarities between tales across the world. However there is a danger of just relying on the identifying motifs. False assumptions can made about all groups of people; that all signs mean the same to the entire human race. There is also the question of whether it is just human nature to look for patterns and ascribe value to them. Artistry and context in folklore is also often ignored in structuralist study.

Functionalism gained traction in folklore studies after WWII. Academics highlighted the idea that folklore has a purpose and is a valuable type of communication. William R Bascom (1965) identified four functions of folklore; education in attitudes, escaping the limitations of society, encouraging conformity, and validation through rituals. Functionalist readings of folklore imply that groups remain unchanged; they also ignore the fact that sometimes folklore undermines and criticises society and societal stability. Functionalism also suggests that the function of lore never changes, and so the group will never change either. Functionalism, as with structuralism, is ahistorical; again context is pushed to the side. The study of folklore cannot happen out of context, whether looking at the work within its own context or the context that the folklorist themself is in.

Along with feminist and intersectional folklore study, psychoanalytic interpretation came to the fore in the 20th century. Many folklore psychoanalysts believe that a culture's chief concerns can be viewed through its collected folklore and the interpretation of symbolic meanings within texts. While the human experience is shared, it has been called simplistic to believe that every human being shares the same experience in the same way. It's also difficult to apply psychoanalytic study to non-verbal folklore.

The Cottingley Fairy hoax was a big influence on folklorist KM Briggs

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The lore of water

Water is a symbol of life, cleansing and healing, but many stories tell of terrifying sea creatures wreaking havoc on the innocent

Written by Rebecca Greig

Water is one of the four cardinal elements. It is needed to support life and is used for healing, cleansing and purification. Folklore about water spirits can be found in many cultures. A Greek water spirit known as the naiad is said to preside over a spring or stream. The Romans believed in camenae, who were similar to the Greek spirits, while many other cultures had their own deity associated with water; Gong Gong, Llyr, Manannan mac Lir, Njord, Neptune, and Namaka just to name a few.

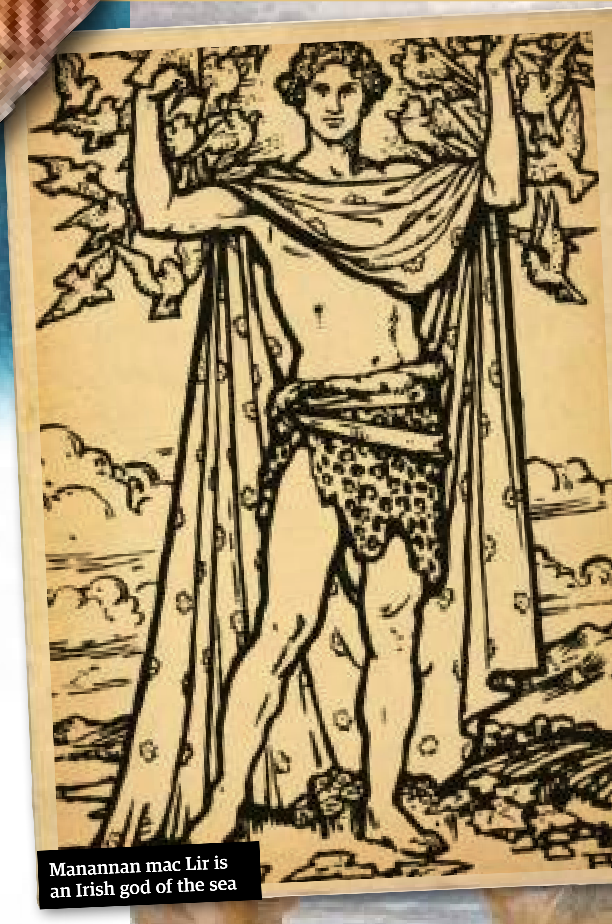
According to British folklore many streams and wells were host to water spirits, and it became a popular custom to toss a bit of silver into a sacred body of water as a type of offering to the god or goddess believed to reside there.

The islands off the coast of mainland Scotland are home to a number of magical myths about the sea. The blue men of Minch are said to be supernatural sea creatures that lived in underwater caves in the Minch, which is situated between Lewis and the Shiant Islands near Scotland. The blue human-like creatures were known for swimming beside passing ships, and trying to destroy them by causing storms and by luring sailors into the water. In order to save his ship, the captain would have to solve their riddles.

In Celtic folklore, a water horse called a kelpie haunts the shores and rivers of Scotland and Ireland. In Scandinavian folklore there is a similar horse-like creature known as Bäckahästen. The stories say that the brook horse would appear in rivers during foggy weather. Those that chose to ride her would never be able to get off and she'd jump into the water and drown them.

They sound like something from the pages of *Harry Potter* (and are) but grindylows (or grundylows) originally appear in British folktales based in Yorkshire. Parents would tell their children of these long-fingered monsters, who would drag children deep underwater and drown them, in that hope that it would deter them from playing in or near the cold waters in the area.

An amusing English adage says that a woman who splashes too much water around while doing the laundry or dishes will be cursed with a husband who drinks to excess. And spilling water from a bucket on the way back from a well or spring is sure to bring misfortune.



Manannan mac Lir is an Irish god of the sea

"Still waters run deep"

Roman proverb

"The sea never buys fish"

Turkish adage

"No one tests the depth of a river with both feet"

Ashanti saying

Rudyard Kipling popularised a story that the London suburb of Teddington (then in Middlesex) meant 'tide end town', referring to the fact that the upstream end of the Thames Tideway is here. The Thames is a partially tidal river, and the tidal part of it reaches back from the Thames Estuary as far as Teddington. Today, however, it's thought that it's more likely to have been named after a Saxon chief.

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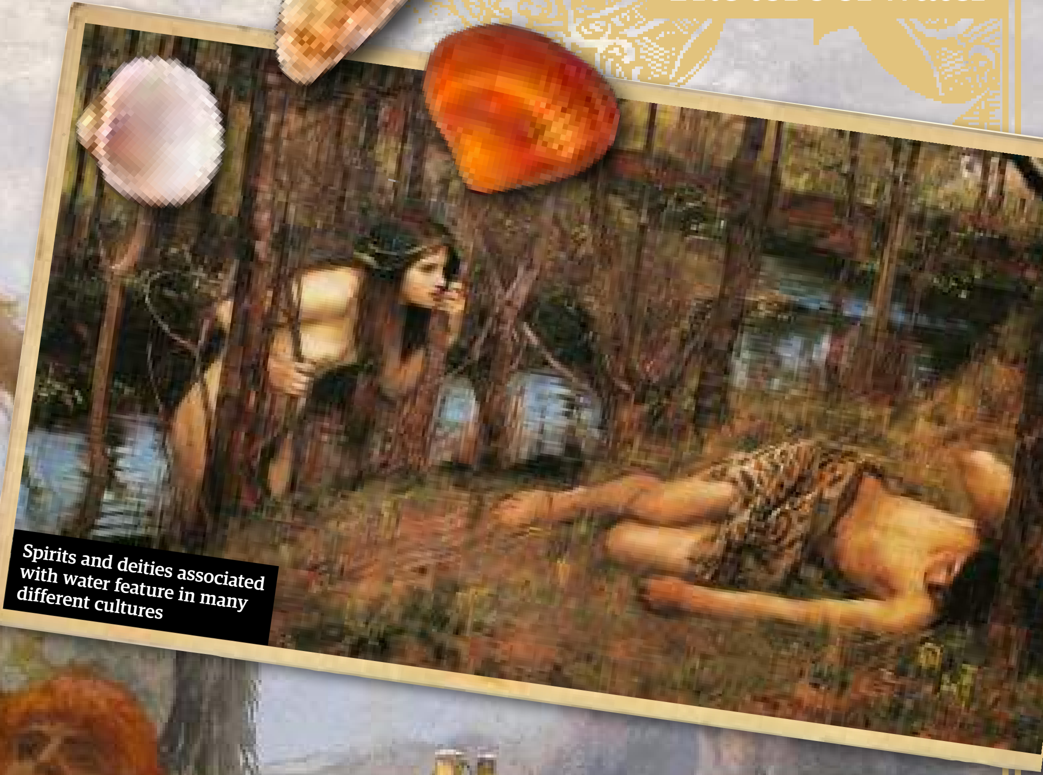
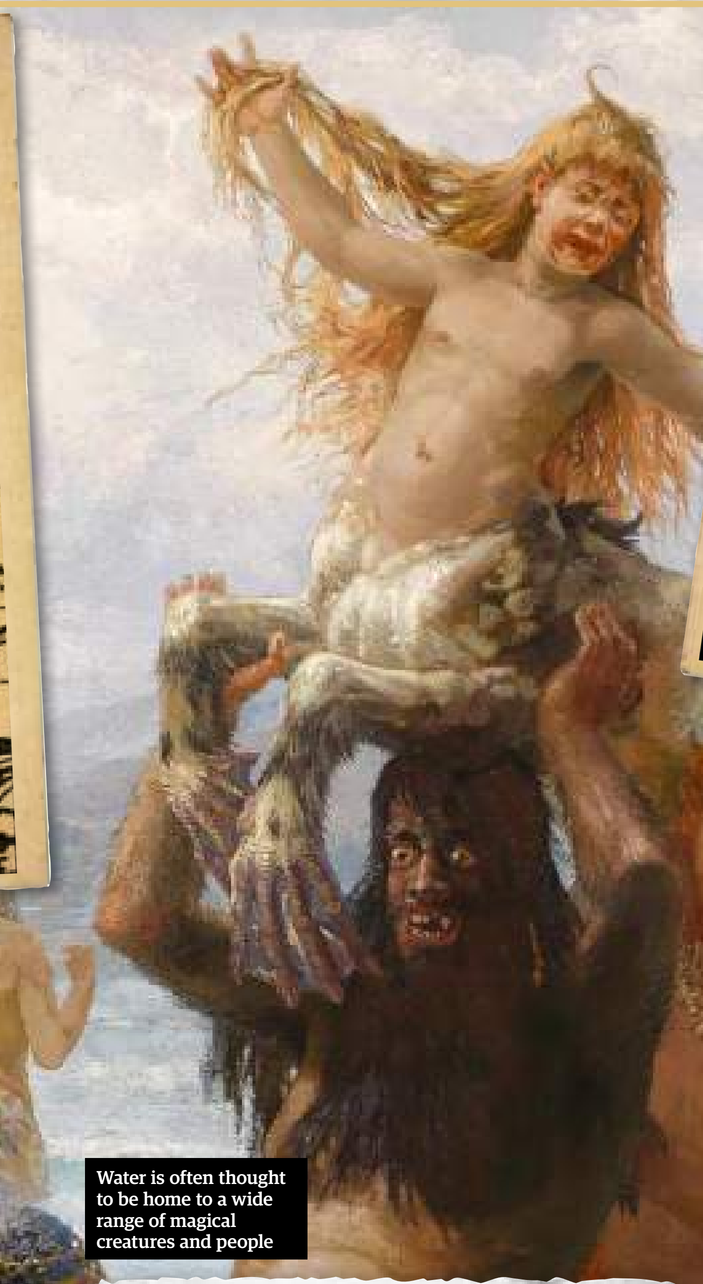
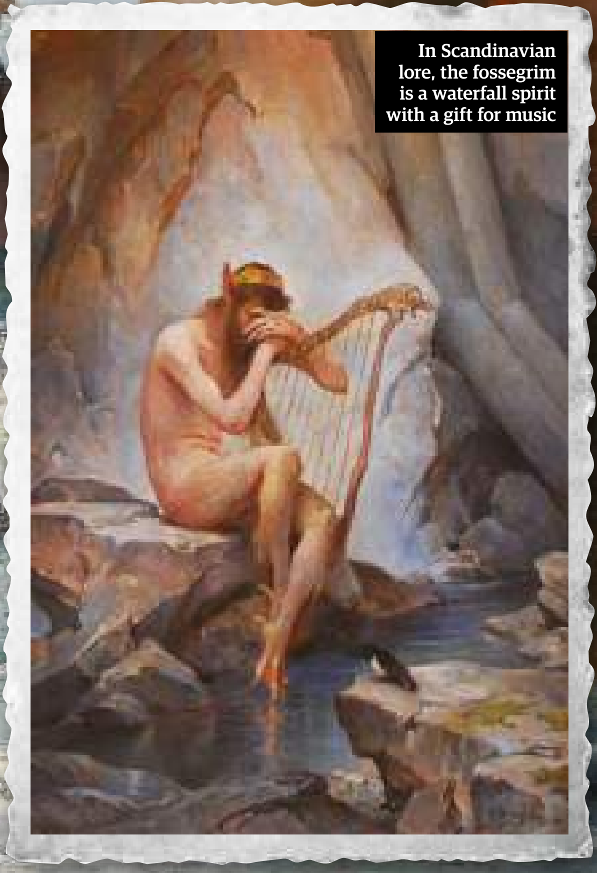


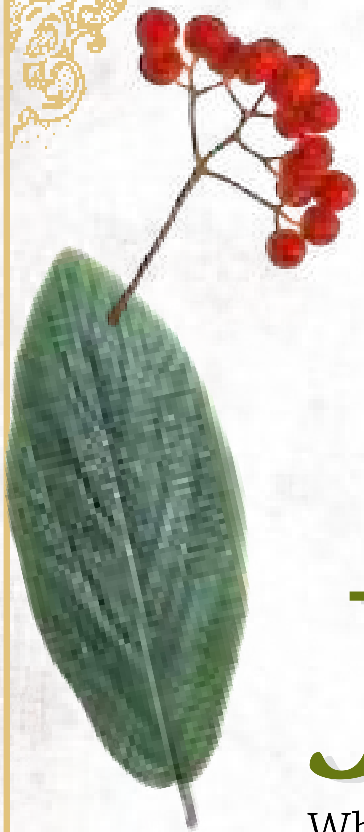
Spirits and deities associated with water feature in many different cultures



Water is often thought to be home to a wide range of magical creatures and people



In Scandinavian lore, the fossegrim is a waterfall spirit with a gift for music



Folklore or fakelore?

When legends are passed down through word of mouth, it can be difficult to pick out the genuine folklore tales from the fake...

Written by Poppy-Jay Palmer

With much of culture being based on oral histories, folklore isn't always representative of fact. Much of it is unbelievable and impossible. But that doesn't stop it from being folklore. However, when a tale is crafted to trick the audience into believing in years and sometimes even centuries of history behind it that simply doesn't exist, folklore starts to become fakelore.

The term 'fakelore' was coined by folklorist Richard M Dorson, who was often referred to as the father of American folklore, in 1950. The concept of fakelore is frequently grouped with urban legend, another folkloric term contributed by Dorson, which is used to describe modern stories which never happened told as if they're true. Dorson often disputed the accuracy of various stories that supposedly stemmed from folklore, such as that of Pecos Bill, a 'folk hero of the American West' who is now believed to be fictional, instead invented by writer Edward S O'Reilly in 1923.

Dorson first used the term fakelore during a debate with author James Stevens, which saw him dismiss the author's book on Paul Bunyan, a 'genuine' American legendary hero and forest warrior that lived during the Papineau Rebellion of 1837, and accuse Stevens of misleading the public with his "synthetic product claiming to be authentic oral tradition but actually tailored for mass edification". In all fairness, the character of Paul Bunyan appeared in many traditional tales told by loggers in the Great Lakes region of North America, and may well have been a real person. But the stories turned from folklore to fakelore when Stevens, who at the time was an ad writer working for the Red River Lumber Company, invented new stories about the hero

Statues of American folk hero Paul Bunyan have been erected all over the United States, despite the fact that the legend is fakelore that have gradually become well known to many Americans living today. As a result, advertisers and popularisers turned Bunyan, an all-American folk hero, into a “pseudo folk hero of 20th century mass culture”. Alongside the likes of Pecos Bill and Paul Bunyan, folk hero Joe Magarac was also identified as fakelore by Dorson.

First appearing in a *Scribner’s Magazine* story written by Owen Francis in 1931, Magarac was a steelworker, and a man literally made of steel, who devoted his life to working 24 hours a day, making rails from molten metal with his bare hands. Eventually, he worked so hard that the mill had to close, and he melted himself down into one of the mill’s furnaces to improve the quality of the steel, all the while despairing at enforced idleness. Francis initially claimed that he was told the story of Joe Magarac by a pair of Croatian immigrant steelworkers in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, saying they told him the word ‘magarac’ was a compliment before laughing and continuing to talk to each other in their own language. After publishing the story, Francis realised that the word ‘magarac’ actually meant ‘jackass’ in Serbo-Croatian, and since no other stories about the character written before 1931 had been found, Joe Magarac could well have been made up by the immigrant workers as a joke on Francis. The writer likely didn’t recognise the story for what it was, a dud, but it’s still thought of as fakelore, blurring the line between folklore and fakelore even further. The false tale managed to spread throughout the industrial areas of the Midwestern United States like wildfire, and even found its way onto Pittsburgh’s local amusement park Kennywood in mural form.

Croatian steelworkers at this Pittsburgh mill invented the ‘legend’ of Joe Magarac to mock writer Owen Francis in the early 1930s

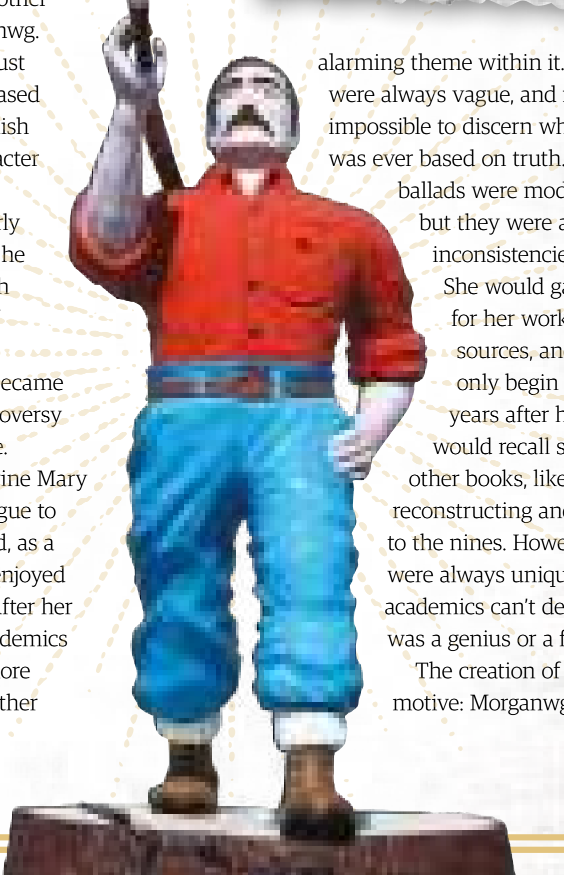
Though many writers throughout history have made up folklore-style stories for personal gain, not all imagined takes on folklore can be counted as fakelore. Writers often embellish old tales or create new ones while using the old as inspiration, but what separates those accounts from true fakelore is the fact that they publish their work without claiming it to be true. A lot of fantasy author Robin McKinley’s work involves her taking ideas from well-known fairytales and presenting them in new ways, often with a feminist twist. Classic French fairytale *Peau d’âne* became *Deerskin*, *Sleeping Beauty* became *Spindle’s End*, *La Belle et la Bete* became both *Beauty: A Retelling of the Story of Beauty and the Beast* and *Rose Daughter*, and the legend of Robin Hood became *The Outlaws Of Sherwood*. What kept these new tales from being classified as fakelore is the fact that McKinley never claimed that they were real folk stories, but cited her influences clearly.

Though based on old folktales, Robin McKinley’s adapted stories are not counted as folklore in and of themselves, but as influenced by it

Even in the 21st century much of Iolo Morganwg’s forgeries of medieval Welsh texts are better known than the originals

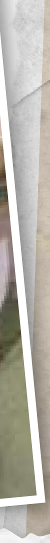
Not all storytellers are as honest as McKinley, and Edward Williams, better known by his bardic name Iolo Morganwg, was one of them. Working as an antiquarian, poet and collector through the turn of the 19th century, Morganwg was considered to be a leading collector of medieval Welsh literature and, indeed, an expert on it. But it was all a facade. Following his death in 1826, it was discovered that he had simply forged a large number of the rare and valuable manuscripts that he had claimed to be real, including parts of the Third Series of Welsh Triads, revealing his life’s work to be a sham.

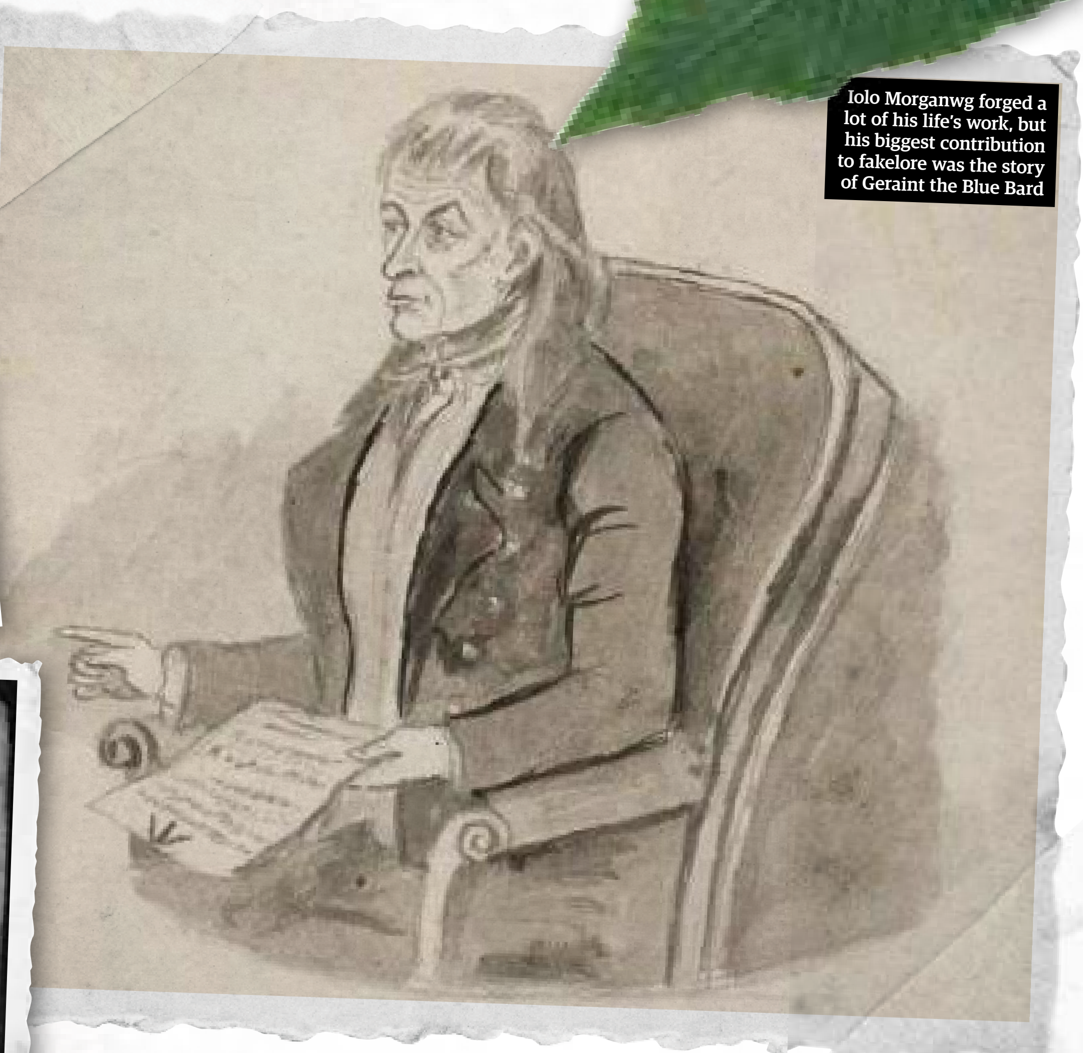
Even now, some of Morganwg’s forgeries remain more famous than the original versions, with his biggest contribution to fakelore being the story of Geraint the Blue Bard. To many lovers of Welsh tradition, Geraint the Blue Bard was a 9th century bard and harpist, the inventor of the Welsh-language poetry form known as cynghenedd, and the brother of King Morgan of Morgannwg. But to Morganwg, he was just an invention, most likely based on a few references in English and Scots poetry to a character named Glascurion briefly mentioned in Chaucer’s early poem *House Of Fame*, who he equated with famous Welsh monk Asser in the court of Alfred the Great.



Similarly, Ruth Tongue became famous for spreading controversy within the world of folklore. Influential folklorist Katharine Mary Briggs helped to bring Tongue to fame in the early 1970s and, as a born storyteller, the latter enjoyed her time in the limelight. After her death in 1981, however, academics began to study her work more closely and discovered a rather alarming theme within it. Tongue’s sources were always vague, and it was usually impossible to discern whether her work was ever based on truth. Her stories and ballads were modern and stylised but they were also riddled with inconsistencies and inaccuracies. She would gather inspiration for her work from all kinds of sources, and would sometimes only begin writing them down years after hearing them. She would recall stories while reading other books, likely leading her to reconstructing and embellishing them to the nines. However, her stories were always unique, and even now academics can’t decide whether Tongue was a genius or a fraud.

The creation of fakelore often has a motive: Morganwg’s forged documents





Iolo Morganwg forged a lot of his life's work, but his biggest contribution to fakelore was the story of Geraint the Blue Bard

helped to heighten his status, Tongue's stories and ballads kept her relevant and respected, and Stevens' creation of Paul Bunyan was believed to be an advertising technique. *The Legend of the Rainbow Warriors*, a tale that not only stretched and embellished truths but also involved a fair amount of cultural appropriation, was no different.

During the 1970s, *The Legend of the Rainbow Warriors* caused many hippies and environmentalists to believe that they were acting to fulfil a Native American prophecy, one that described a future in which the planet would come to a time of crisis, causing people of different races to come together to save it, in which the new tribe of people would be called the 'Rainbows'. For that to happen, the 'prophecy' stated that their "light-skinned brothers and sisters" would inherit the ways of the Native people as their reincarnated souls, or that the Native people would die out to be replaced by the new ways of the Rainbows.

For years, the legend was credited as being a real First Nations prophecy. In reality, the story actually originated from an evangelical Christian religious tract titled *Warriors Of The Rainbow* by William Willoya and Vinson Brown, published in 1962 by Naturegraph Publishers.

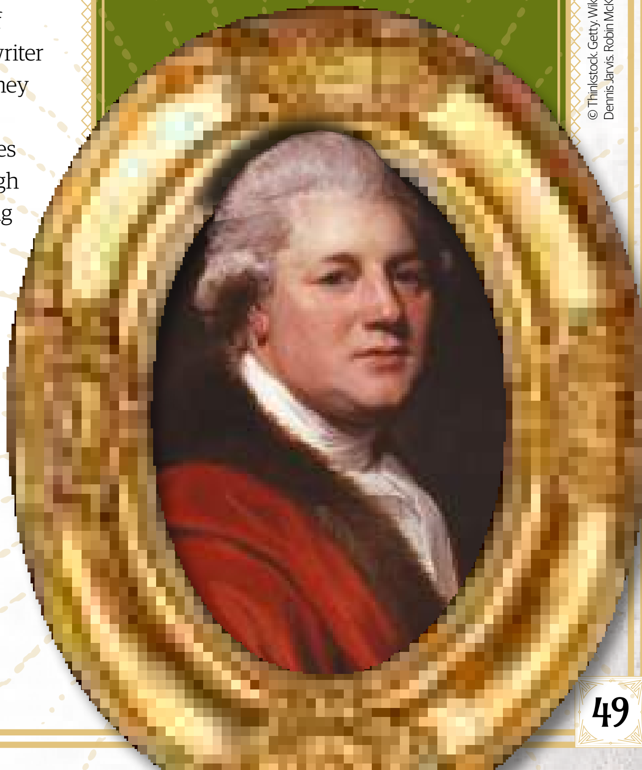
Whether the practicing Rainbows knew it or not, the 'prophecy' was merely a gross example of religious fakelore, used to exploit, dehumanise and appropriate the culture of America's indigenous community.

A key factor to consider when determining if something is fakelore or not is intent: did the writer believe the stories they told to be true, or did they intend to hoodwink? The fact that folklore by nature is based on myth and beliefs, with stories being passed down by word of mouth, is enough to shroud the culture in mystery, without taking into account that perhaps not all storytellers may be reliable. There's a fine line between fact and fiction when it comes to folklore, and an even finer line when deciding which sources we can trust and which will say anything for a shot at fame and credibility. Embellishment and exaggerating has always gone hand-in-hand with storytelling, but when the storyteller starts to stray too far away from the original source – if there was even an original source to begin with – fakelore begins to rear its head.

James Macpherson's 'translated works'

In 1761, Scottish writer, poet, literary collector and 'translator' James Macpherson announced that he had discovered an epic poem about Fingal, related to the Irish mythological character Fionn mac Cumhaill, or Finn McCool, which was supposedly written by Fionn's son Ossian. He claimed he had collected the word-of-mouth poem in Scottish Gaelic and translated it so others could enjoy it too. He subsequently released the rather clumsily titled *Fingal, an Ancient Epic Poem in Six Books, Together with Several Other Poems Composed by Ossian, the Song of Fingal, Translated from the Gaelic Language*. As soon as the volume reached readers, the authenticity of the so-called translations was challenged by a number of Irish historians, most notably Charles O'Conor. To O'Conor, it seemed clear that the work was not genuine. He pointed out technical errors (including the incorrect forming of Gaelic names) and made comments on the implausibility of Macpherson's claims, but he was unable to substantiate them. Samuel Johnson also famously tried to debunk Macpherson's efforts, believing that he had simply found fragments of poems and stories and then attempted to stitch them together into a romance of his own composition. Despite the dubious levels of legitimacy surrounding Fingal, Macpherson gained an international reputation – even Napoleon Bonaparte was fooled.

James Macpherson (painted here by George Romney) claimed he had discovered a collection of mythological poems about Fionn mac Cumhaill and translated them from Scottish Gaelic



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Fairytales

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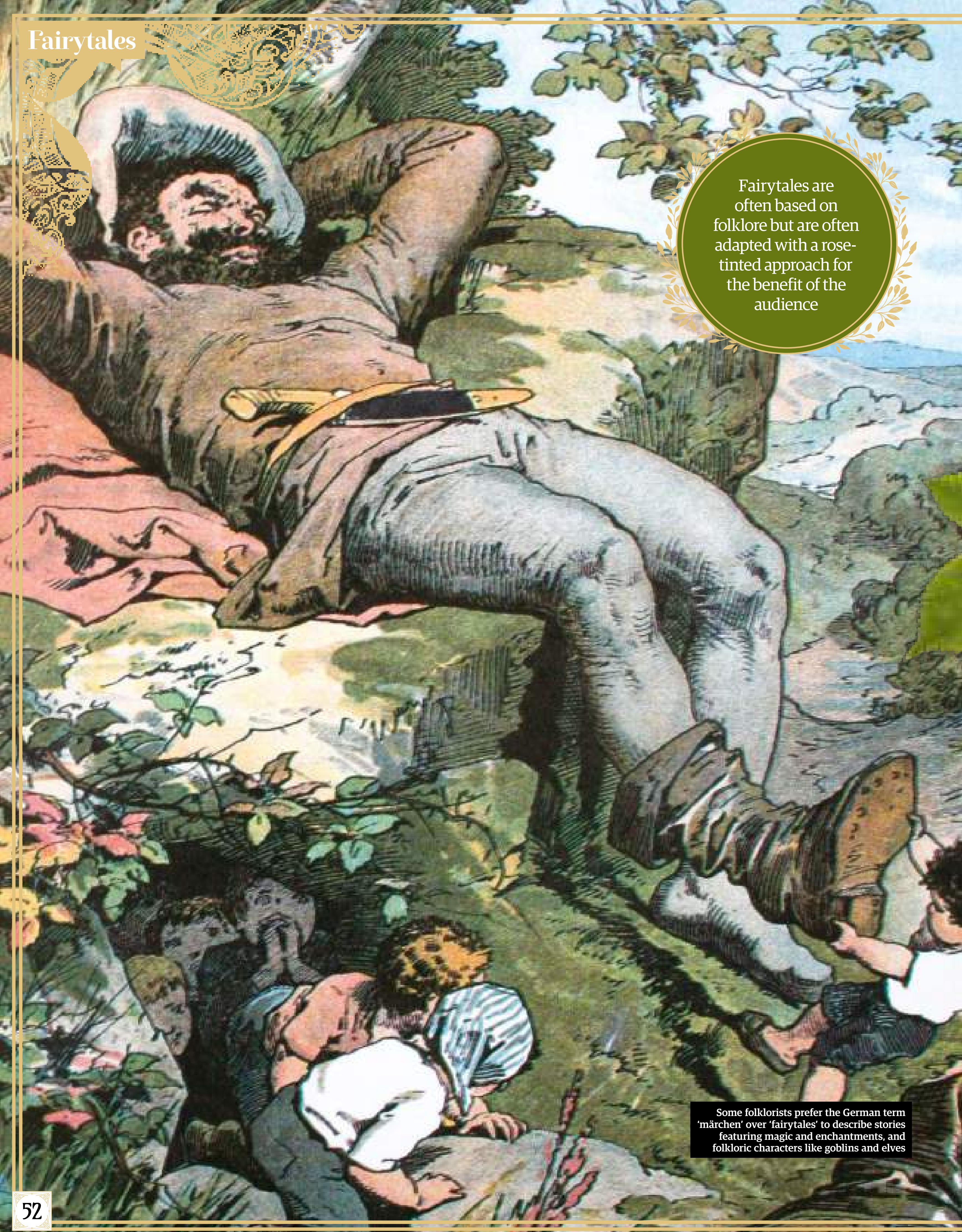
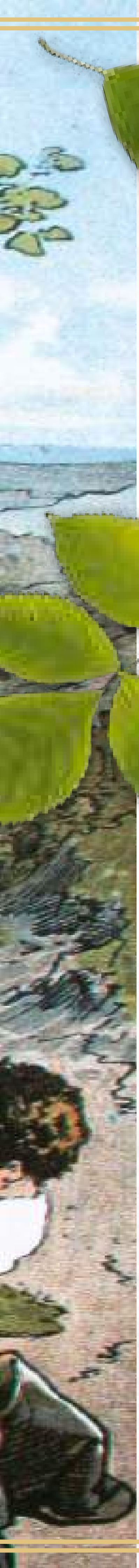


Fairytales are often based on folklore but are often adapted with a rose-tinted approach for the benefit of the audience

Some folklorists prefer the German term 'märchen' over 'fairytales' to describe stories featuring magic and enchantments, and folkloric characters like goblins and elves



Folklore versus fairytales

Fairytales and folklore have been entwined for centuries, but they are very different forms of storytelling. We investigate how to tell them apart…

Written by Poppy-Jay Palmer

Fables. Myths. Legends. They're almost as old as the Earth itself, and almost always come with a lesson to be learnt. But there are subtle, though huge, differences between fairytales and true folklore, starting with the wording.

We've all heard the classic fairytale opening lines: "Once upon a time," "long, long ago," "far, far away…" It's never specific. Throughout the years, we've grown used to hearing these lines and expecting a long narrative filled with royalty, magical kingdoms, mystical animals and morals to follow. But the opening lines are rarely specific. Unlike folktales, fairytales don't tend to take place anywhere in particular. Most have roots in certain countries, often the homelands of the original authors, but after being watered down and generalised, often for the benefit of children, they are usually set in some mystical land, at one time or another.

With a fairytale opening comes a fairytale ending and a snappy but classic closing sentence, with "…and they lived happily ever after," being a popular way to end. The concept of "happily ever after" also sets fairytales and folklore apart. When it comes to storytelling conventions, different genres take their different audiences into account, and fairytales are no exception. The happily ever after – be it in the form of the completion of a troubling quest, a couple staying together forever, or simply survival – may be for the benefit of the characters, but it's also for the audience.

No matter the fairytale, the linguistic conventions and storytelling structure often remain the same. The exact wording may change depending on which language is used to tell the story – "In some country, there was..." is a common opening line in Bengali, while "whistle, whistle, the story is done," is an often-told ending in Afrikaans – but most have a universal theme: the stories have no discernible setting, and the endings are usually happy ones. The same can't always be said for folktales.

In his 60-page essay *On Fairy-Stories* in 1939, author JRR Tolkien examined the difference between fairytales and folktales, focusing heavily on the work of Scottish poet Andrew Lang, as both a folklorist and a collector of fairytales. After receiving a quiet reception upon its release, the essay picked up more steam when it was re-released in 1964 in Tolkien's book *Tree And Leaf*, alongside an allegorical short story called *Leaf By Niggle*.

On Fairy-Stories received much more attention the second time around, as it contained an early analysis of speculative fiction by one of the most influential and important authors in the genre, and explained his philosophy on fantasy and his thoughts on his own mythopoiesis.

In his essay, Tolkien picked apart Lang's tendency to include a number of different types of stories, such as traveller's tales (like *Gulliver's Travels*) and beast fables (like *Aesop's Fables*), in his famous Fairy Books collection. Instead, Tolkien believed that the fairytale genre should only include the fables that took place in what he called 'Faerie', meaning some sort of enchanted realm, with or without fairies as characters.

The essay was basically written as a way of defending Tolkien's own stories like *The Hobbit* and *The Lord Of The Rings*, highlighting that fairy-stories, or fantasy stories, aren't always just for children.

Tolkien believed that fairytales should incorporate three key elements: they should allow the reader to review their own world from the perspective of a different one, they should offer escapist pleasure to the reader, and they should provide moral and emotional consolation through their happy endings, unlike classic folktales. Additionally, he believed that a truly good and representative fairytale is marked by the presence of joy: "Far more powerful and poignant is the effect [of joy] in a serious tale of Faerie," he wrote. "In such stories, when the sudden turn comes, we get a piercing glimpse of joy, and heart's desire, that for a moment passes outside the frame, rends indeed the very web of story, and lets a gleam come through."

However, not all folklorists agree with him. Some prefer to use the German term 'märchen', or 'wonder tales,' when referring to fairytales, which distinguishes the genre from traveller's tales, science fiction, beast tales and dream stories. Although many contain fantastical folkloric characters like fairies, goblins, elves and trolls, an authentic fairytale is presented as a wholly credible story. Likewise, wonder tales don't necessarily have to be set in enchanted kingdoms far, far away and a long, long time ago. They can take place anywhere, at any time. In his book *The Folktale*, folklorist Stith Thompson describes wonder tales as "a tale of some length involving a succession of motifs or episodes. It moves in an unreal world without definite locality or definite creatures and is filled with the marvellous. In this never-never land ... the characters and motifs of fairy tales are simple and archetypal ... and include magical helpers,

Danish writer Hans Christian Anderson was a collector of fairytales, with his stories reaching a range of different groups of people, from children to adults

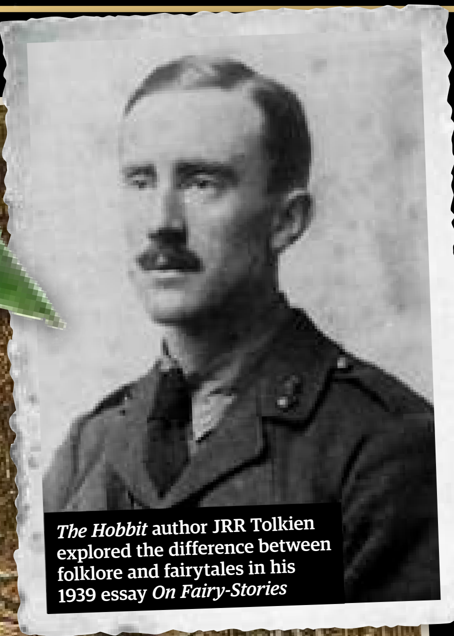
A fairytale ending...

In the past, the term 'fairytale' has been used to describe a particular brand of storytelling. But, like most words, the passage of time and resulting societal changes have caused 'fairytale' to have more than one connotation.

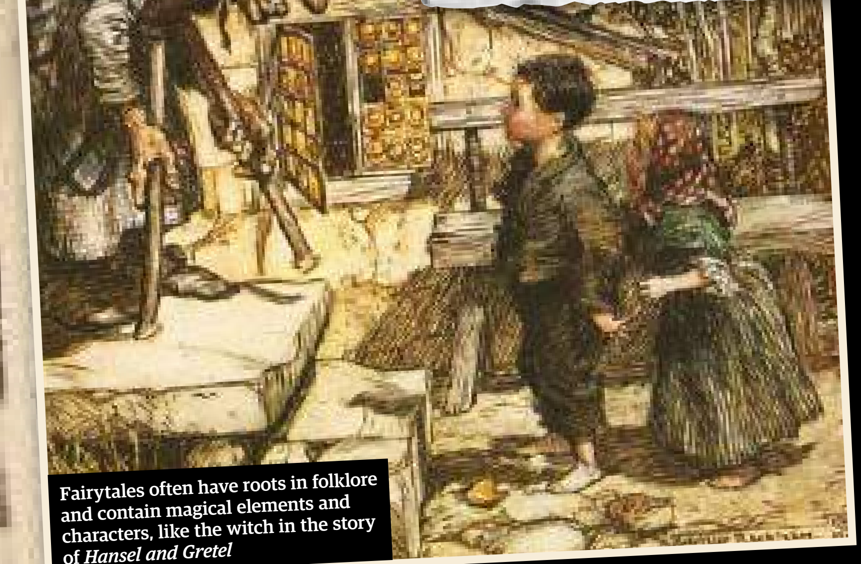
Nowadays, the term is generally used in the context of happiness, like a 'fairytale ending' being used to describe a happy resolution to a story. Even modern tales with no fantastical elements, particularly of the romance genre, are described as having a fairytale ending if they close with something that resembles a 'happily ever after' or 'true love's kiss'. Likewise, the phrase 'fairytale wedding' is often used to describe a beautiful and lavish union, almost a dream-come-true.

The term conjures up images of enchanted forests, grand castles, adorable woodland creatures and princes and princesses living happily ever after and in harmony with their loyal subjects in a kingdom far, far away. It's always big, marvellous and majestic. Which is strange, considering many classic fairytales didn't have happy endings. Some are ghastly, like the old folktales they are based on. But, for the sake of description, in this context the more nightmarish tales are often forgotten.

'Fairytale' has found its way into the everyday lexicon, usually to describe something happy, dream-like or lavish, like a fairytale wedding or fairytale ending



The Hobbit author JRR Tolkien explored the difference between folklore and fairytales in his 1939 essay *On Fairy-Stories*



Fairytales often have roots in folklore and contain magical elements and characters, like the witch in the story of *Hansel and Gretel*

often talking horses, or wild animals, or birds." Unlike true folktales, new wonder tales continue to be created in the modern world.

Historically, folktales are often ruthless when it comes to getting a moral across. They aren't always concerned with happy endings or even keeping the story clean, which separates them from fairytales in another way. A lot of well-known fairytales are based on folklore, but they are typically reworked and sanitised, aimed at younger readers and told through a rose-coloured childproof filter. The pregnancy in the original story of *Rapunzel* is usually cut out of modern retellings. *The Little Mermaid* didn't lose the prince and turn into sea foam after Disney got its hands on the tale. Modern *Pinocchio* fans don't often know that Gepetto was arrested, the talking cricket was killed, and the eponymous puppet was hanged and left for dead. Likewise, basic character archetypes like 'the princess' and 'the prince' are given personalities and names, turning them into 'Snow White' or 'Prince Charming'. They are transformed from the faceless figures of folklore tales into actual characters, making them easier to relate to and sympathise with. As most folktales are in the oral tradition, spread and passed down by word of mouth, many fairytales are told in the same way, causing them to be warped and altered over time, which explains how people who both hear and tell the stories don't always know of their true origins.

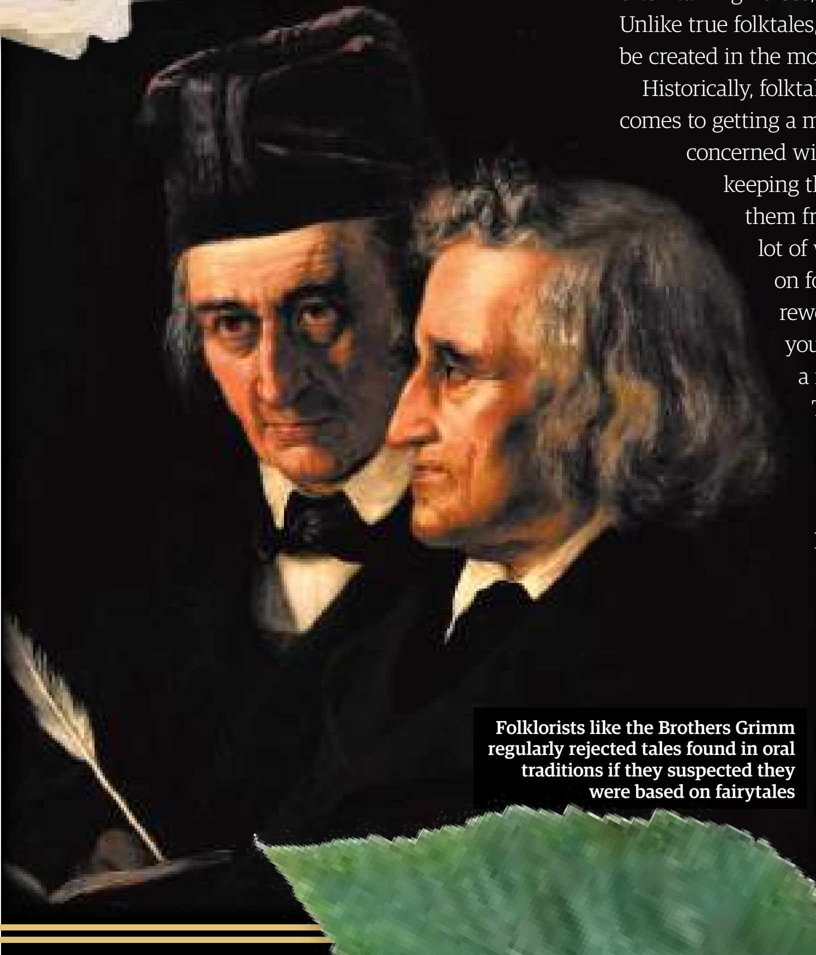
Not all folklorists trust fairytales passed down through oral traditions, however: the Brothers Grimm often rejected certain kinds of tales if they thought they might have been based on fairytales. As collectors of German folktales, the Brothers Grimm were the first to attempt to preserve not only the plot but the characters of the tales, and retell them in the same style that they were first told. Their mistrust of tales told in the oral tradition was a result of this, as they couldn't always be sure of the origins.

Fairytales can usually be distinguished from folktales by the presence of a named author. We often think of the story of *Sleeping Beauty* as a classic fairytale that has been passed down and retold multiple times by multiple people; in actual fact, the story was first published by French author Charles Perrault 1697 (the same is true of other 'classic' fairytales like *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Cinderella*, *Puss in Boots* and *Bluebeard*). Though the Brothers Grimm were first told the tale of *Sleeping Beauty* orally, they rejected it owing to the fact that it had been derived from Perrault's work.

However, the tale of *Little Briar Rose* – which was clearly related to Perrault's *Sleeping Beauty* – was included in their collection only because Jacob Grimm managed to convince his brother Wilhelm that the character of Brynhildr (originally from much earlier Norse mythology) proved that the sleeping princess archetype originated from authentic German folklore.

The problem with *Sleeping Beauty* and the Brothers Grimm has led some folklorists to believe that folk tradition is often preserved through fairytales, except when the folk tradition becomes contaminated and leads people to tell inauthentic tales. Modern retellings of fairytales often contain hints of true folklore within them, but it's become almost impossible to discern the 'authentic' parts from the 'contaminated' parts.

Although folklore and fairytales are closely interrelated, they are still distinct forms and should be approached as such. Their histories are often deeply entwined, but key elements exist to tell them apart, lest we mistake make-believe stories for folklore legends.



Folklorists like the Brothers Grimm regularly rejected tales found in oral traditions if they suspected they were based on fairytales

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The history of fairytales

From *The Facetious Nights of Straparola* to Charles Perrault, the Salon Era and Disney's takeover, the fairytale genre is still developing and capturing imaginations everywhere

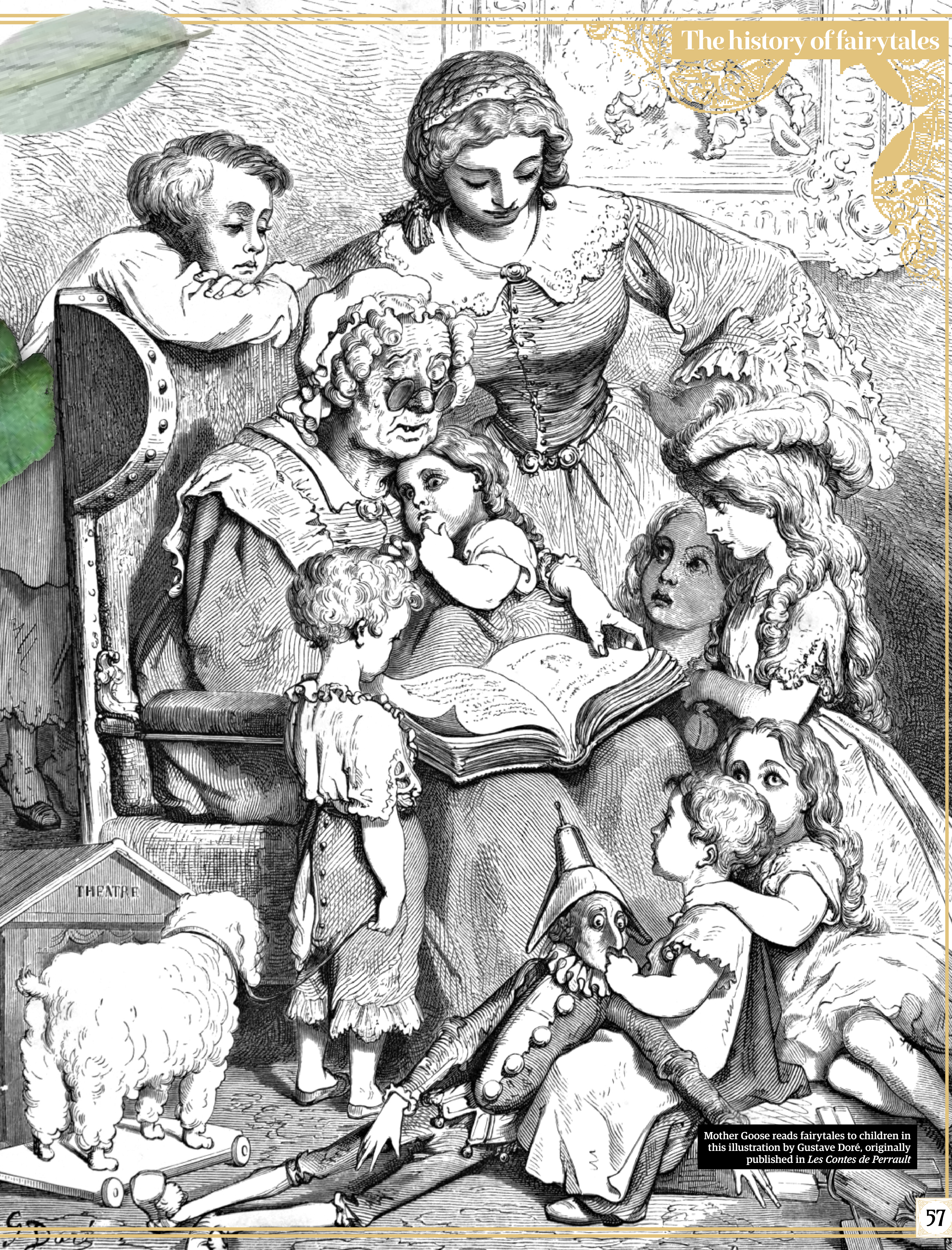
Written by Poppy-Jay Palmer

After centuries of people spreading fairytales through the oral tradition, the next natural progression was to take those fairytales to the page, transforming them from folklore to proper works of literature. Italian writer Giovanni Francesco Straparola did just that with his book *The Facetious Nights of Straparola*, a two-volume collection of 75 stories that he had gathered through his work as a collector of tales, first published in Italy between 1550 and 1553 under the title *Le Piacevoli Notti*, or *The Pleasant Nights* when translated into English. *The Facetious Nights Of Straparola* included a bit of everything, from realistic novellas and tragic love stories to beast tales and accounts of old practical jokes, as well as several now well-known fairytales. Modelled after Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*, a 14th century collection of novellas, the stories are knitted together through a main narrative, which follows a group of participants at a party on the island of Murano who tell each other a range of fantastic and titillating stories. The storytellers were mostly women, while their listeners were historical men of letters like Venetian humanist Bernardo Cappello and Italian scholar Pietro Bembo.

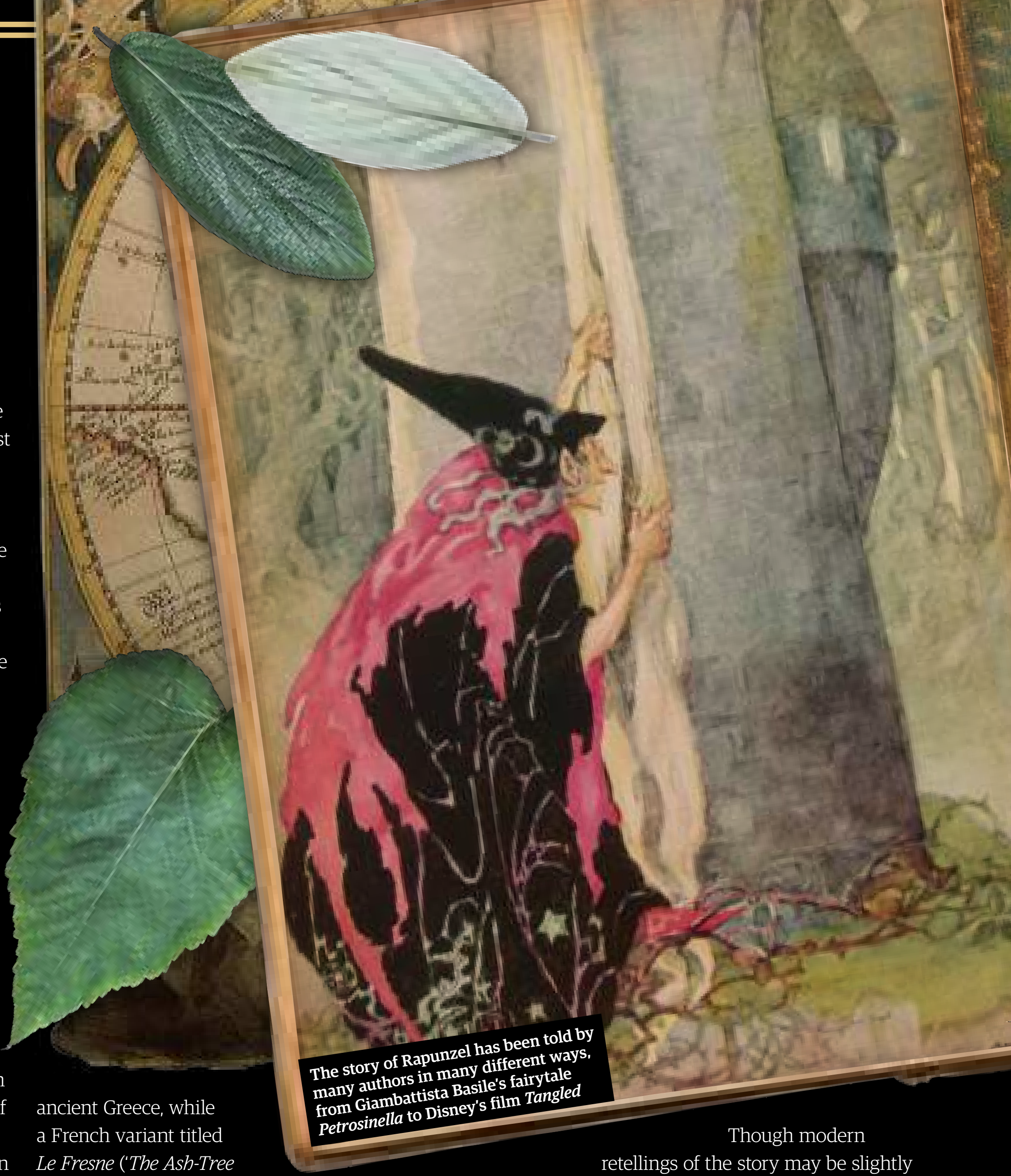
Although fairytales are now widely thought of as being children's stories with relatively tame content, *The Facetious Nights of Straparola* was deemed a touch too bawdy and inappropriate for a conservative audience, and was subsequently placed on the List of Prohibited Books in 1624, forbidding Catholics to read it without seeking prior permission. However, *The Facetious Nights of Straparola* is still widely thought of as a significant piece of work, as it was the first storybook to feature fairytales ever published in Europe. It was translated into Spanish in 1583, but only appeared in English in 1894, more than three centuries after its first Italian publication.

Many of the fairytales featured in the book were some of the first recorded instances of now-famous stories: *Puss in Boots*, the classic story of a trickster cat gifted to a prince, may have been made famous by French writer Charles Perrault (in *Le Maître Chat*, or *The Master Cat*), but it made its literary debut in *The Facetious Nights* as *Costantino Fortunato*. The story itself was not one of Straparola's own; instead, it had travelled to Europe after starting life as an Indian folk tale featured in a collection of Hindu tales from the 5th century AD, titled the *Panchatantra* ('*Five Principles*'). The original Indian story wasn't exactly the same, but it had similar themes, as did Perrault's version. In Straparola's version, however, the poor young man was the son of a Bohemian woman, the castle belonged to a dead lord rather than an ogre, and the cat was a fairy in disguise.

Italian soldier, government official and fairytale collector Giambattista Basile retold many of the tales featured in *The Facetious Nights* in his book *Pentamerone* (or *The Tale of Tales*, or *Entertainment for Little Ones*) including that of *Puss in Boots*. However, Basile's retelling of the story ends differently to both Straparola and Perrault's versions. *The Tale of Tales* was significant in that



Mother Goose reads fairytales to children in this illustration by Gustave Doré, originally published in *Les Contes de Perrault*



The story of Rapunzel has been told by many authors in many different ways, from Giambattista Basile's fairytale *Petrosinella* to Disney's film *Tangled*

is was the first written collection that consisted entirely of fairytales, and *Puss in Boots* wasn't the only one he adapted: he also examined the stories of *Cinderella*, *Rapunzel*, *Sleeping Beauty* and *Hansel and Gretel*.

The version of *Cinderella* that appeared in *The Tale of Tales* was titled *Cenerentola* and was one of the earliest recordings of the story. It was set in the Kingdom of Naples, which at the time was the most important cultural and political centre of southern Italy and one of the most influential European capitals. Instead of transcribing his tales from the oral tradition for the collection, Basile instead wrote them in Neapolitan, making him the first writer to preserve oral intonations in many respects. Basile's version of *Cinderella* that featured in the *Tale of Tales* is relatively recognisable when put next to the story that most people know today: it featured an evil stepmother and wicked stepsisters, its heroine magically transforming and losing a slipper, and the monarch starting a country-wide hunt in an attempt to find the owner of said slipper. But the modern-day story has warped slightly since the original was first told.

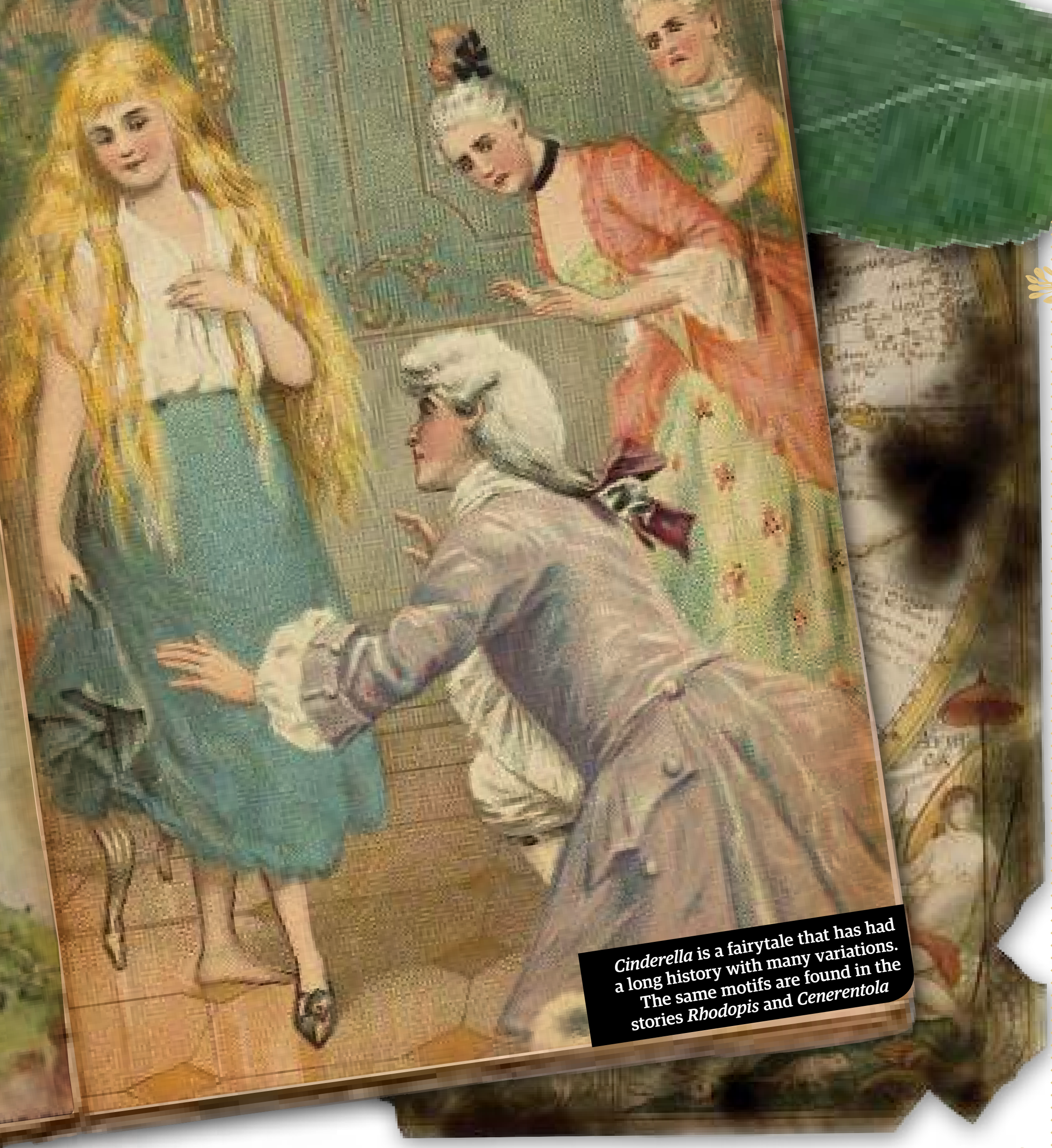
In Basile's telling, the Cinderella figure was Zezolla, the daughter of a prince who was brought up by a beloved governess. With Zezolla's help, the governess persuades the prince to marry her, making her Zezolla's new stepmother, before revealing six daughters of her own, all of whom torment and abuse Zezolla and make her work in the kitchen as a servant. Leaving his daughter with her awful new family, the prince visits the island of Sardinia and meets a fairy who gives him presents for Zezolla: a golden spade, a golden bucket, a silken napkin, and a date seedling. Upon the prince's return, Zezolla cultivates the seedling until it becomes a mighty date tree, which houses another fairy. Receiving an invitation to a ball hosted by the king, the poor Zezolla dresses richly with the help of the fairy, and the king falls in love with her. However, Zezolla runs away and twice escapes the king's servant before he can discover her identity. After leaving her slipper behind, Zezolla and the king are reunited when he invites all the maidens in the land to partake in a shoe-test, and the slipper jumps from the king's hand and onto Zezolla's foot.

Earlier oral versions of the story existed before Basile's. The tale of *Rhodopis*, a Greek courtesan living in the colony of Naucratis in Egypt, involving an eagle snatching a sandal, was popular in ancient Greece, while a French variant titled *Le Fresne* ('*The Ash-Tree Girl*') has been told since the 12th century. Asian versions of the story have also done the rounds among folk enthusiasts over the years: *Ye Xian*, which appeared in *Miscellaneous Morsels from Youyang* by Duan Chengshi, from around 860, followed a hardworking girl named Ye Xian who befriends a fish that turns out to be a reincarnation of her deceased mother. When her evil stepmother and sister kill the fish, Ye Xian saves the bones that then magically help her dress for the New Year Festival. However, she flees the festival when her stepfamily recognises her, and loses a slipper on the way. She is finally rescued from her family when the king finds the slipper she left behind and falls in love with her. Of all the Cinderella stories that came before Basile's, *Ye Xian* resembles it the most.

> Many fairytales like *Cinderella* and *Rapunzel* have multiple different variations and have been adapted over centuries

Though modern retellings of the story may be slightly different, they all have solid roots in *Cenerentola*, with just a few key differences. Basile's version of *Rapunzel* was similar. Most know the story published in *Children's and Household Tales* by the Brothers Grimm, but the *Tale of Tales* version of *Rapunzel*, titled *Petrosinella* ('*Parsley*'), was the earliest recorded variant of the story known to exist.

The story follows a pregnant woman who steals parsley from the garden of an ogress. Upon being caught, she promises the ogress her child in exchange for being released. Finally, the woman gives birth to a beautiful baby girl, Petrosinella. As the baby grew up, each day she would pass the ogress, who would tell her to remind her mother of her promise, until she is finally captured and put in a tower with no gate or ladder, just a tiny window through which the ogress would ascend and descend using Petrosinella's long hair. Much of the story follows the one we all know: Petrosinella falls in love with a prince, who climbs up her tower by way of her hair. But Petrosinella couldn't escape; an enchantment had been placed on her, and could not be broken unless she held three



Cinderella is a fairytale that has had a long history with many variations. The same motifs are found in the stories *Rhodopis* and *Cenerentola*

gallnuts from the kitchen in her hand. On one of his visits the young man retrieves the gallnuts and helps Petrosinella descend from the tower, and they run towards the city with the ogress hot on their heels. Petrosinella throws one of the gallnuts at the ogress and a bulldog appears, making to attack her. But the ogress is too clever for the dog, and throws it a piece of bread to eat instead. A second gallnut transforms into a lion, but the ogress strips the skin off a jackass and drapes it over herself while running at the beast, which bounds away in fear. Finally Petrosinella throws the last gallnut and a wolf appears. In her haste to stay away from the lion, the ogress forgets to remove the jackass skin from her back and the wolf gobbles her up. Pretrosinella and the young man escape the tower and the ogress forever, and are finally free to marry and live happily ever after.

As with many early versions of fairytales, certain themes contained within Basile's *Rapunzel* have endured through to the modern day retellings but there are still obvious differences that have been changed for one reason or another, be it to streamline the story or to sanitise it. Different versions of *Rapunzel* appeared in numerous books after the *Tale of Tales*, including Andrew Lang's *Red Fairy Book* (published in 1890), Ruth Manning Sanders' *A Book of Witches* (1965), and Paul O Zelinsky's picture book *Rapunzel* (1997). The original story also possessed a striking resemblance to the Persian mythological character Rudāba, who appeared in Ferdowsi's epic *Shahnameh* ('*Book Of Kings*'), written somewhere between 977 and 1010 CE. She was a princess of Kabul who offered to let her long hair down from a tower so that her lover Zāl could climb up to her. Additionally, Basile's story could well have been based on the tale of real-life Christian Greek saint and martyr Saint Barbara, who was believed to have been locked in a high tower by her father before being executed by him.

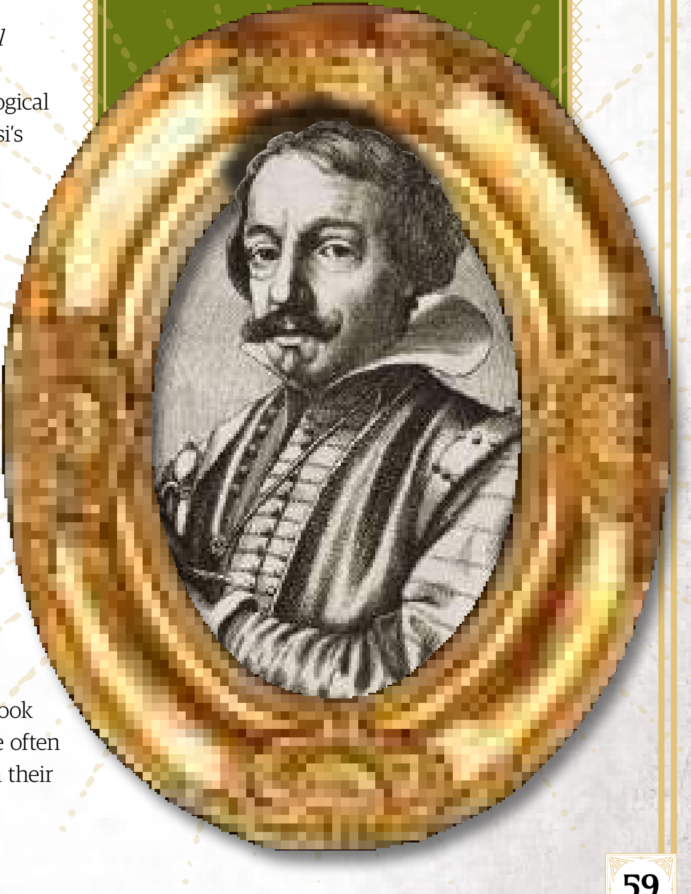
As time passed, other authors attempted to tell the stories that featured in collections like Straparola's *Facetious Nights of Straparola* and Basile's *Tale of Tales*, but each put their own stamp on them. The Brothers Grimm's retellings, which appeared in their pivotal collection book *Grimms' Fairy Tales* (published in 1812), were often darker and contained more adult content; in their

Giambattista Basile
1566-1632

Born in Giugliano to a Neapolitan middle-class family, Giambattista Basile started his career as a courtier and soldier to a number of French princes. But through expressing an interest in the ancient, he started collecting old fairytales and tried his hand at rewriting them. His collections included some of the oldest recorded forms of many famous European stories.

Over the course of his life, he became most famous for his fairytale collection titled the *Pentamerone*, also known as *The Tale of Tales*. It told a range of old folk stories Basile had heard over the years, each containing various classic fairytale motifs that he had collected.

The finished book contained early written versions of famous Italian fairytales like *Peruonto*, *The Flea*, *The Merchant*, *Penta of the Chopped-off Hands* and *The Enchanted Doe*, as well as several more widely known fables like *Rapunzel* (titled *Petrosinella* in *The Tale of Tales*), *Snow White* (The Young Slave) and *Sleeping Beauty* (*Sun, Moon, and Talia*). At first neglected by the masses, his work went on to earn attention after it received praise from the Brothers Grimm, who applauded it as Italy's first national collection of fairytales.



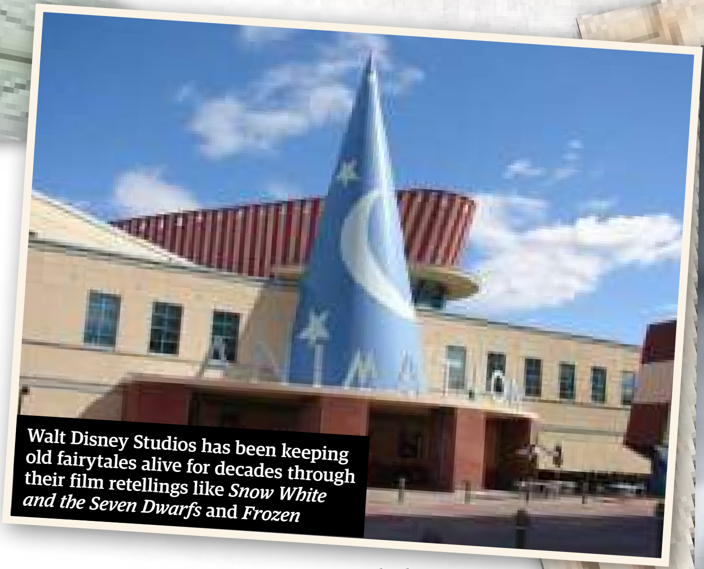
Basile started as a courtier and soldier, and went on to heavily influence the world of literature through his Italian fairytales

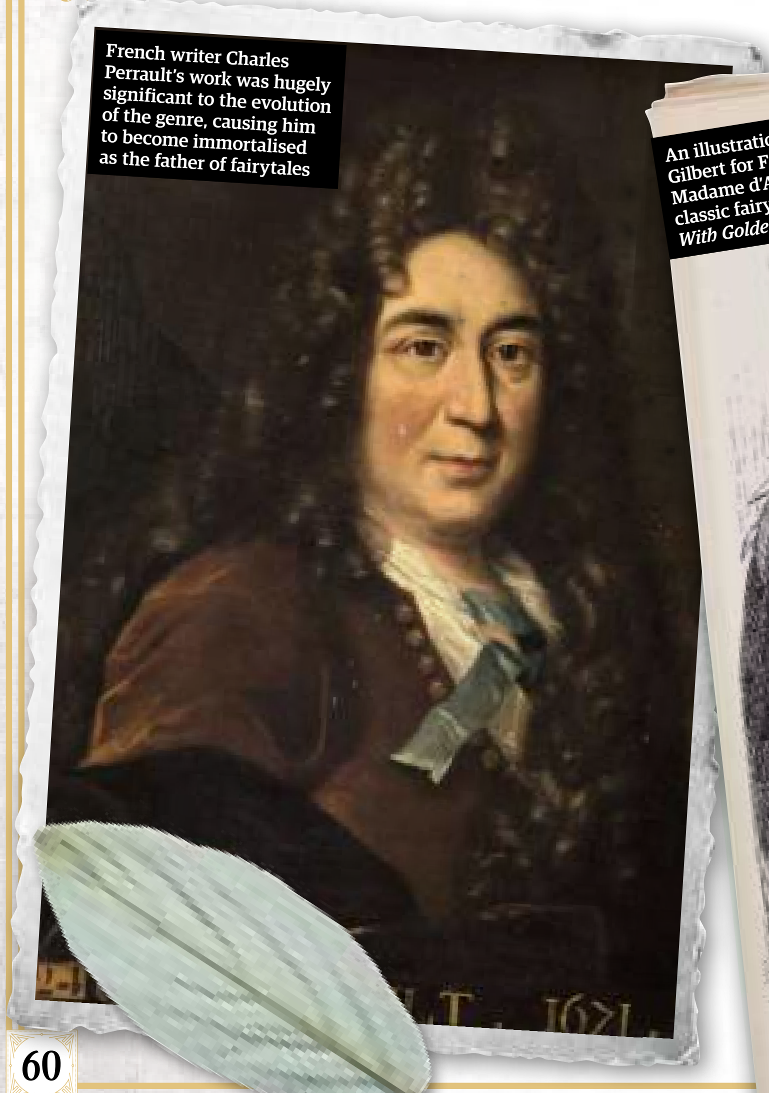
version of *Rapunzel*, the heroine innocently tells her captor that her dress is growing tighter around her waist, hinting at a pregnancy and revealing her lover's visits. Similarly, a retelling of the story by French writer Mademoiselle de la Force (titled *Persinette*, also published in 1812) also featured the heroine becoming pregnant as a result of the lover's visits to her tower.

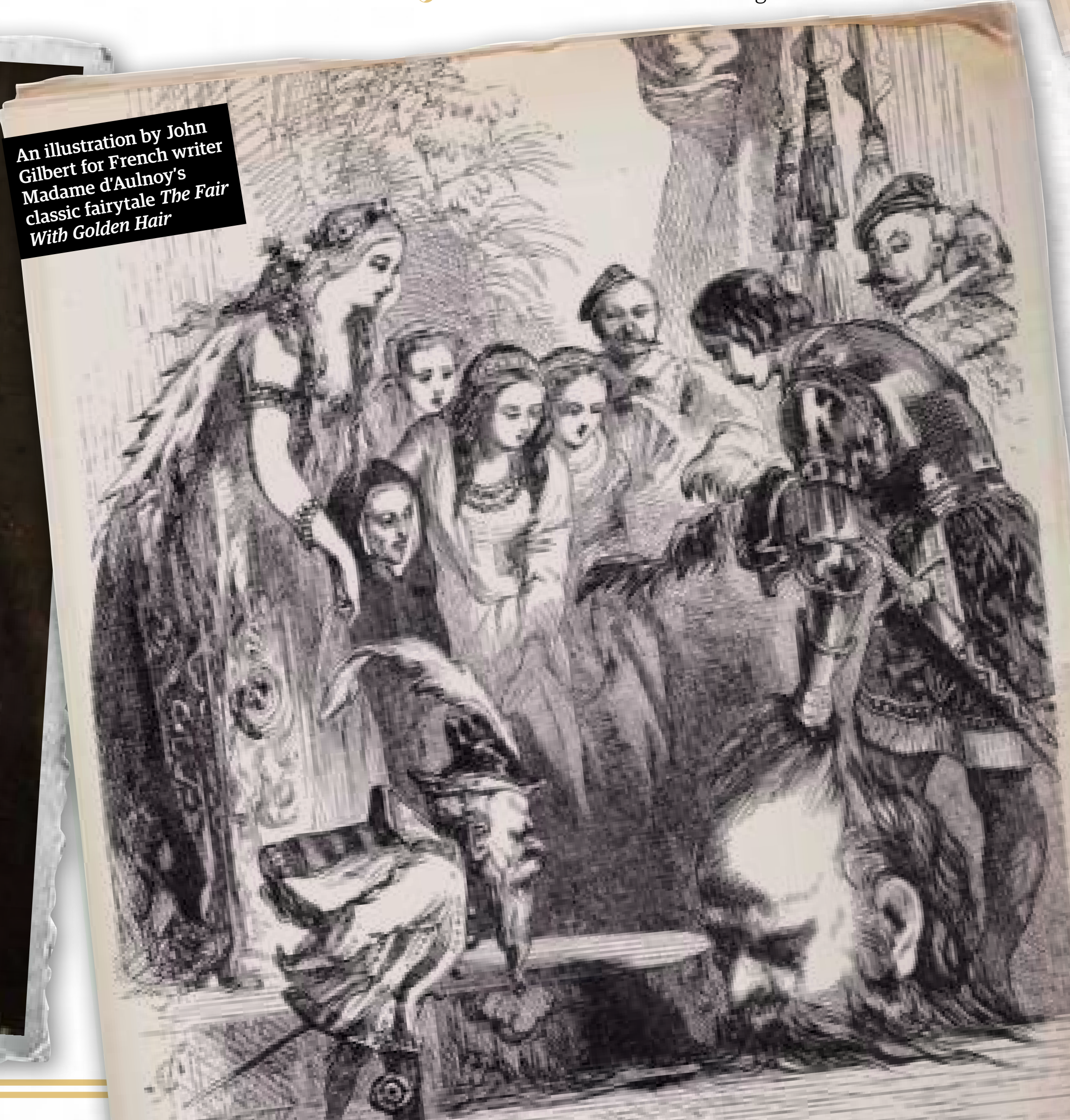
One of literature's most famous fairytale storytellers is French writer Charles Perrault, whose work has been hugely significant to the genre's evolution, causing him to become immortalised as the father of fairytales. Born in Paris in 1628, Perrault started his career as a lawyer before dedicating his time to his interest in fairytales and writing countless stories that countless more writers have since retold. Alongside the aforementioned *Le Maître Chat*, Perrault also retold famous tales like *Le Petit Chaperon Rouge* (*Little Red Riding Hood*), *La Barbe Bleüe* (*Bluebeard*), *La Belle au Bois Dormant* (*The Sleeping Beauty in the Woods*) and *Cendrillon, ou la Petite Pantoufle de Verre* (*Cinderella; or, The Little Glass Slipper*). Through his work, Perrault became famous for ornamenting old folklore subjects, taking them out of the drab, real-world settings of their original folk tales where princesses still had to do chores. Instead, he launched the characters of his stories into a new elaborate world. He was the first to do so, and subsequently created the sparkly, aristocratic world that most people now associate with fairytales.

However, unlike the genteel, moral-orientated fairytales we know today, many of Perrault's stories were grisly and unconcerned with being respectable, or even child-friendly. But the grislier stories still usually managed to keep hold of their morals. For example, in his version of *Little Red Riding Hood*, an old European folk tale that can be traced back to the 10th century, he makes it more explicit that the villainous wolf is in fact a man intent on preying on little girls that venture alone into the woods. He famously wrote: "I say Wolf, for all wolves are not of the same sort; there is one kind with an amenable disposition – neither noisy, nor hateful, nor angry, but tame, obliging and gentle, following the young maids in the streets, even into their homes. Alas! Who does not know that these gentle wolves are of all such creatures the most dangerous!" Over time, his stories have slowly morphed from the survival tales he favoured into more refined tales tailored towards a younger audience, meaning they are now missing much of the gore and uncouthness of Perrault's originals.

> "Perrault became famous for ornamenting old folklore subjects"


Walt Disney Studios has been keeping old fairytales alive for decades through their film retellings like *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and *Frozen*


French writer Charles Perrault's work was hugely significant to the evolution of the genre, causing him to become immortalised as the father of fairytales


An illustration by John Gilbert for French writer Madame d'Aulnoy's classic fairytale *The Fair With Golden Hair*

Walt Disney's first full-length animated movie was a retelling of the fairytale *Snow White*

© 17 May 1946 Boy Scouts of America

Though many writers and collectors dealt in fairytales for centuries beforehand, the term 'fairytale' wasn't actually used until the late 17th century, when it was coined by French countess and author Madame d'Aulnoy. The term comes from the translation of *Contes de Fées*, her collection of stories published in 1697, and was originally a term she used to describe her own tales, which often featured literal fairies. Following the book's publication, the term fell into much wider usage.

Her stories were told in a far more conventional style than those of other writers like the Brothers Grimm, and often recounted the adventures of love and happiness coming to heroines after they had defeated great obstacles. They were considered far more 'proper' and more respectable than the likes of Perrault's stories, but many were still unsuitable for children.

Madame d'Aulnoy was just one of a range of authors that saw in the Salon Era of fairytales. Starting in the mid-17th century, the Salon Era began in Paris. Aristocratic women would offer their living rooms, or salons, to host gatherings to which other aristocratic women would go to discuss the issues of the day: art and letters, love and marriage, politics, financial and physical independence, the lack of access to education for women, and the like. From the Salon Era came a slew of predominantly upper-class female authors like Madeleine de Scudéry and Madame de Lafayette, who used their writing to push the barriers and fight for women's independence. In some of the salons, the hot topic was magical tales, and women, and occasionally men, with a keen interest in folklore would gather to discuss them.

In the middle of the 17th century, a parlour game based on the plots of old folk tales was all the rage: each guest was called upon to retell or rework an old folk tale or theme, and turn it into a clever new story. Stories would become political, and the ornamental language used in most fairytales would be cleverly crafted to disguise rebellious subtexts that suited the era.

Just as many fairytale authors wrote about stories they had learnt through folk traditions, perhaps even more have since made up their own stories. Writers like Hans Christian Andersen, Lord Dunsany and even Oscar Wilde took inspiration from the fairytale collectors that came before them, studying the various themes and narrative styles regularly found in the genre to pen original tales. Andersen's tales would occasionally draw on old folklore, but more often would merely feature well-known fairytale motifs in brand new stories, like *The Little Mermaid*, *The Ugly Duckling*, *Thumbelina*, *The Little Match Girl* and more.

Nowadays, much fairytale knowledge comes from films, particularly those retold by Disney, with the studio putting its own spin on everything from the Brothers Grimm's versions of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and *Rapunzel* (retitled *Tangled* for the film) and Charles Perrault's *Cinderella* and *Sleeping Beauty* to the traditional Chinese story of *Hua Mulan* and Hans Christian Andersen's make-believe tales *The Little Mermaid* and *The Snow Queen* (in the form of *Frozen*). Sometimes, fairytales find themselves entwined for their film retellings: the version of *Sleeping Beauty* made famous by Disney is a combination of Perrault's tale *La Belle au Bois Dormant* and the Brothers Grimm's *Briar Rose*, while *The Princess and the Frog* merges the Brothers Grimm's *The Frog Prince* and ED Baker's 2002 novel *The Frog Princess*.

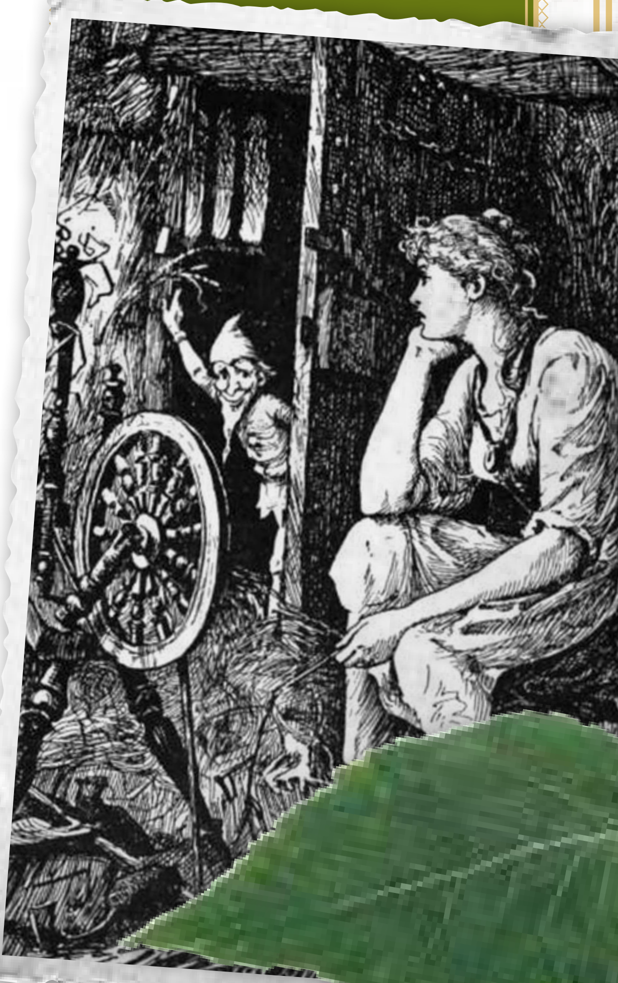
Though the passing of time and a lot of creative license has led many of the older stories to be warped and distorted, the film industry has still been an integral outlet in the distribution of fairytales in modern times. For a lot of people living today, the first time they encountered certain fairytales was through film.

Andrew Lang
1844-1912

Alongside his work as a poet, novelist, literary critic and keen contributor to the field of anthropology, Scottish writer Andrew Lang was most famous for collecting folk and fairytales. Over the course of his career, he published 25 fairytale collections (the most well known being the 12 books in Andrew Lang's *Fairy Books of Many Colours*), which were made up of a whopping 798 true and fictional stories and 153 poems. Lang's wife, author Leonora Blanche Alleyne, was credited as a translator for most of his stories.

Lang found sources for stories for his Fairy Books from all over the place: he adapted tales written by well-known authors like the Brothers Grimm, Madame d'Aulnoy and Hans Christian Andersen, as well as more general folklore traditions from literally all over the world, and tales from Norse mythology. With each story, Lang would give a brief description of the source from which he found it. However, the sources were often vague. Some were given simply as 'Grimm' or 'Madame d'Aulnoy', while his source for *The Wonderful Birch* was listed only as 'from the Russo-Karelian'.

An illustration of the well known tale of *Rumpelstiltskin*, as featured in *The Blue Fairy Book* by Andrew Lang, first published in 1889



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What makes a fairytale?

Motifs, stock characters and familiar story arcs have been recognised as vital building blocks of folklore and fairytales, yet were new concepts in the field of folklore studies in the early 20th century

Written by Rebecca Lewry-Gray

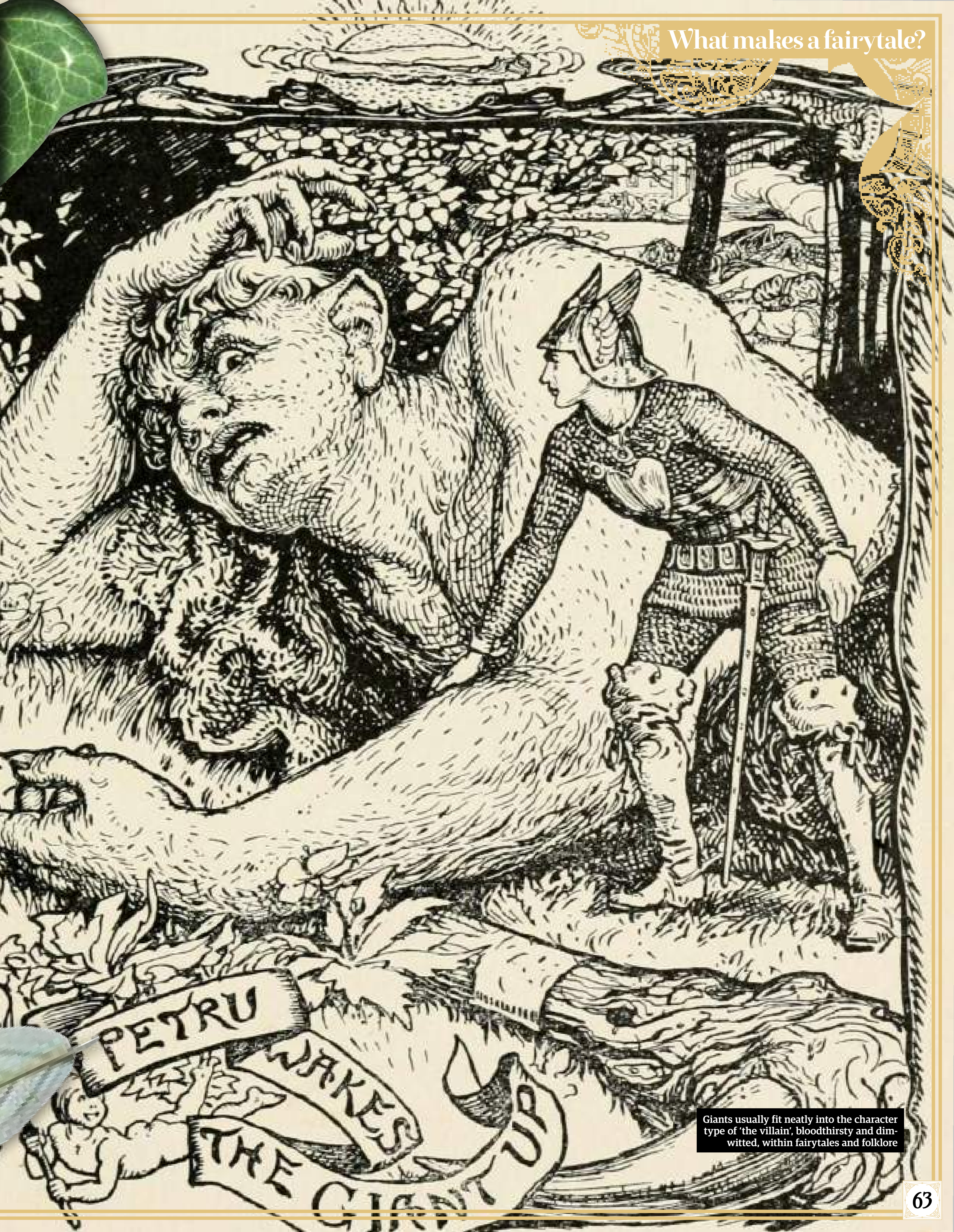
In studying folklore and fairytales, folklorists have used a number of different approaches, schools of thought and tools. One of the most notable tools is the Aarne-Thompson-Uther (ATU) classification index. The ATU Index is a system to categorise, classify and organise folk tales. This can then be used to identify shared narratives, motifs and stock characters. While the ATU Index has weaknesses, it is an incredibly useful tool for many folklorists.

Folklorist Sara Graca da Silva and anthropologist Jamshid J Tehrani used the ATU Index to establish the time of emergence for tales of magic, and identified four tales that belong to the Proto-Indo-European (an ancient ancestor of Indo-European languages) stratum of magic tales.

Folklore expert Alan Dundes wrote in 1997 that "the use of [the Index] serves to distinguish scholarly studies of folk narrative from those carried out by a host of amateurs and dilettantes". Finnish Antti Aarne (1897-1925) organised all the folktales in Scandinavian collections in the first index as *Verfzeichnis der Marchentypen* or *Directory of Fairy Tale Types* (1910). Aarne developed a historio-geographic method of comparative folkloristics that was pioneered by folklore professor Kaarle Krohn and his father, folklorist Julius Krohn. Comparison was, for both Krohns, a way to find the original version of a work. Krohn also paid attention to variations in text in the same geographical area, mapping and tracing the origin of a text geographically.

Aarne developed the classification system or index of tale types by identifying motifs and repeated ideas in the narrative. The scope was Western European in focus.

American folklorist Stith Thompson (1885-1976) undertook the first revision in 1928 by translating it into English and expanding the system and thematic groups by adding asterisks for 'irregular types'. Thompson also added the AT number system. The AT Index divides tales into sections with an AT number for reference; tale types are given broadly descriptive names, such as '510:


PETRU WAKES THE GIANT UP

Giants usually fit neatly into the character type of 'the villain', bloodthirsty and dim-witted, within fairytales and folklore

The persecuted heroine'. Later, Thompson wrote his own six volume *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* (1955-58), which is then cross-referenced in his 1961 second revision to the AT Index. This second revision contained most European folk tales by umbrella topic and included specific subcategories, like 'B- Animals/ B600-699- Marriage of person to animal'. Thompson explains how motifs and tale types are interrelated in *The Folktale* (1977), and that the sequential order of motifs is important. We recognise a cluster of motifs because they are so tied together due to repetition in folklore; for example, chains of circumstances that move a tale along to completion.

German literary scholar Hans-Jorg Uther (1944) created the third major revision of the Index in 2004; this was the culmination of a three-year project. Uther criticised the original work by pointing out that Thompson's focus on oral tradition sometimes ignores older written versions of some stories. Western and northern Europe is also heavily represented when compared to non-Western folklore content. The Index is structured according to genres and arranged by theme, so it is difficult for all forms of world folklore to fit neatly into the Index. The forms that cannot comfortably sit in this kind of index - myths, short forms like jokes, and modern genres like refugee accounts, are 'othered'. Uther sought to find ways around Aarne and Thompson's restrictions, but also viewed a worldwide register of international folklore of all sorts of genres as being "impossible" (2009). This new revision was created to answer some of the criticisms against the old. As scientific exactness does not exist in folklore, all criticisms cannot be attended to. Descriptions of tales were made more precise and enlarged references to older written versions of tales, particularly southern and eastern European tales, were more fairly covered. Uther also rewrote many titles to un-erase female protagonists. This edition was twice as long as previous versions.

The ATU Index was criticised by folklorists because its limitations and rules excluded some relevant folklore

Russian folklorist Vladimir Propp criticised the AT Index (as it was in the 1920s) on the basis that it ignored the functions of the motifs that were classified. Propp felt that as the Index looks at stories on a 'macro level', many subtle elements of the folktale could be missed. Motifs in stories can shift categories, depending on changes made by storytellers. The influence of the academic choice of salient features of tales may also lead to folklore being inaccurately categorised.

Freudian interpretations of fairy tales can explore themes of impulse control and oral fixations

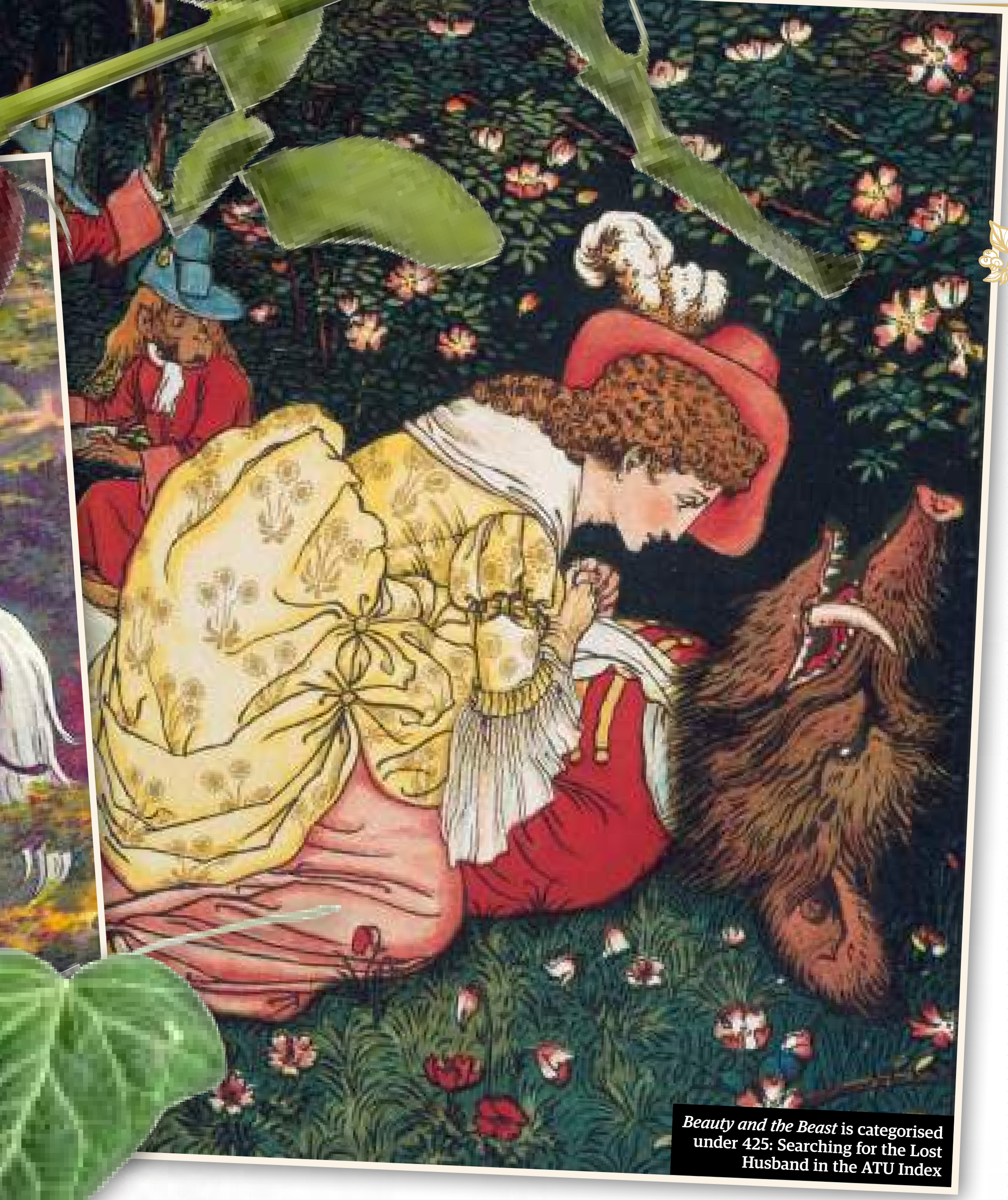
The hero's journey is a useful pattern to examine fairytales; it can also be used as a tool in literature and screen writing

Propp categorised fairy tale characters into seven functions. The Princess is often the prize to be rescued by the Hero

Propp identified sequences of motifs as 'elements' or functions that typically happened in Russian fairytales. These functions were the building blocks that make fairytales, typically happening in a prescribed order, with some variation of structure. Propp's 31 functions ('narratemes') in a story start with 'absentation' (the hero or the relation they must rescue), through guidance and struggle, ending in 'wedding' (the hero is rewarded). These 31 narratemes can be further condensed down to four spheres; introduction, body of the story, donor sequence (the search for an item to help in the quest) and the hero's return. Some criticism levelled at Propp is that he was not interested in understanding culture. Social and historical approaches were explored later in his work *Historical Roots of the Folktale* (1949).

Propp categorises all characters present in a fairytale into seven broad stock functions: the Villain, the Dispatcher, the Helper, the Princess or Prize, the Donor, the Hero and the False Hero. These roles can sometimes be conflated into one character or split across multiple characters. These characters are necessary to move the story along; the hero is often the main character who reacts and defeats a villain, villains create struggles for the hero, dispatchers send the hero off on their quest, helpers are often magical entities that assist the hero, the princess is often the prize at the end of the story, the donor often tests the hero and awards them a magical object, the false hero takes credit for the hero's actions or tries to take the prize from them. Propp, as a formalist, was heavily criticised for ignoring originality and creativity and just looking for a pattern. Contemporary French structuralist Claude Levi-Strauss argued against Propp, to show the shortcomings of formalism and the strengths of structuralism.

The study of hero narratives began with Edward Burnett Tylor identifying common patterns in plots in 1871, and the monomyth, the common



Beauty and the Beast **is categorised under 425: Searching for the Lost Husband in the ATU Index**

template that involves a hero on an adventure experiencing crisis and victory before returning home changed, has been used for folkloristic study. Joseph Campbell popularised heroic myth pattern studies in 1949 in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Campbell describes 17 stages necessary in an adventure folktale, which can be divided into three acts: Separation (departing on an adventure), Initiation (striving to complete tasks and challenges), and Return (with wisdom and experience). There are many monomyth examples in literature, animation and cinema. Hollywood film producer and screenwriter Christopher Vogler wrote a seven-page memo, *A Practical Guide to the Hero with a Thousand Faces*, for Walt Disney Studios in the 1980s, based on Campbell's work. He then expanded this memo into a number of screenwriting textbooks. Campbell and Vogler take a Jungian approach; these characters and motifs occur in the dreams of all people and the myths of all cultures. Vogler distills this down to making movies with near-universal appeal. The monomyth is flexible, capable of endless variation without sacrificing magic.

Fairytale interpretations vary widely and the significance of certain elements of stories can be under- or overstated. Mythological interpretations often attach importance to traditional solar mythical readings and the lives and deaths of characters. This theory has fallen out of fashion, as not every motif should be read as an allegory for wind, sun or rain. Some folklorists view folklore as a historical document, evidence of ancient customs shown in traditional stories. Psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud posited that dreams and fairytales give an insight into the unconscious and that true beliefs can be read through fairy stories. Freud also gave psychosexual readings of folktales such as *Red Riding Hood*. Many psychological folklorists read *Sleeping Beauty* as being an allegory for puberty and *Hansel and Gretel* as a cautionary tale about id impulses and oral fixations. But whether the tale-type or the psychological meaning of the motif came first is a mystery.

Vladimir Propp
1895-1970

Vladimir Propp was born in Saint Petersburg, Russia in 1895. After attending university he became a college teacher and later a faculty member at Leningrad University until his death in 1970. The book he is best known for, *Morphology of the Folktale*, was published in 1928 and translated into English in 1958 and 1968. His study of folktales and their motifs was then followed in 1946 by *The Historical Roots of the Wonder Tale* (partially translated into English in 1984). In this he approached folk tales in a social and historical way. The posthumous work *The Russian Folktale* (1984) focused on the rise of folklore studies in Russia and the West. This book was based on notes that students took from lectures that Propp delivered in preparation for the book's publication. These three pieces of work, when studied together, allow us to grasp Propp's approach to folk tales and folklore. Propp is often characterised as an eccentric, working hard on an academic task that no one else had tackled, often using complex formulae to represent the tales he studied. There has also been much discussion over whether Propp was censored by the government of the Soviet Union, however former students have now dispelled this.

Vladimir Propp was a Soviet folklorist who explored tales from a functionalist standpoint. The West embraced his early works when they were translated in 1958

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Animals

Good things come in threes... *The Three Bears* and the *Three Little Pigs* are the most recognisable tales here

Written by Rebecca Greig

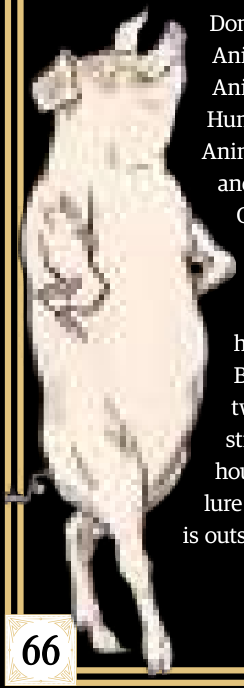
The tales in this category use animals both wild and domestic to tell stories that often mirror human behaviour and society. They often display depictions of trickery and deception as well as heroic acts, selflessness and bravery. They are all stories that are deeply relatable and help to explain many of life's biggest lessons.

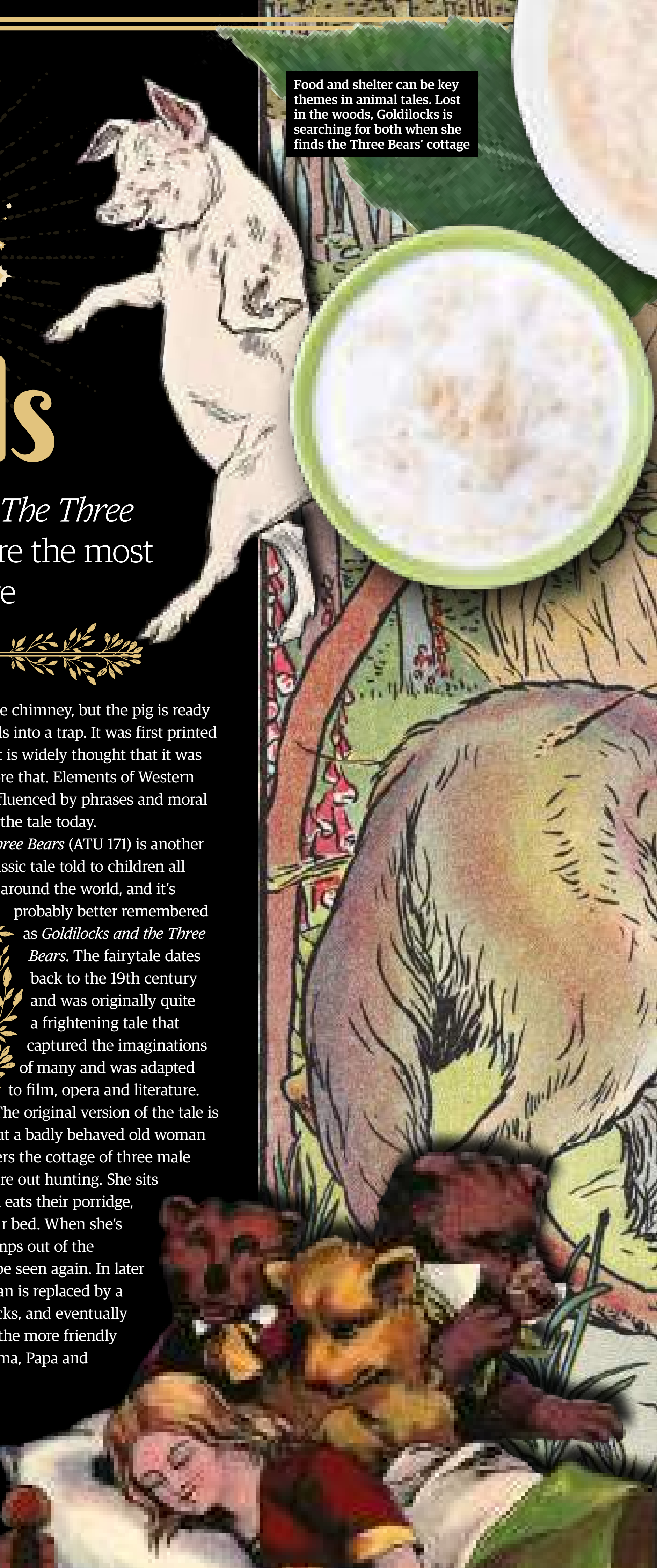
The stories are split up in various sub-categories including Wild Animals, The Clever Fox (Other Wild Animals), Wild Animals and Domestic Animals, Wild Animals and Humans, Domestic Animals, and Other Animals and Objects.

One of the best known of these fairytales is *Three Little Pigs* (ATU B124). It's a fable about three little pigs that build three houses out of different things. A Big Bad Wolf blows down the first two houses, made of straw and sticks, but can't destroy the third house made of bricks. He tries to lure the last pig out of the house but is outsmarted each time. Eventually he enters down the chimney, but the pig is ready for him and he falls into a trap. It was first printed around 1840 but it is widely thought that it was first told long before that. Elements of Western culture are still influenced by phrases and moral lessons from the tale today.

The Three Bears (ATU 171) is another classic tale told to children all around the world, and it's probably better remembered as *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. The fairytale dates back to the 19th century and was originally quite a frightening tale that captured the imaginations of many and was adapted to film, opera and literature. The original version of the tale is about a badly behaved old woman who enters the cottage of three male bears while they are out hunting. She sits in their chairs and eats their porridge, then sleeps in their bed. When she's discovered she jumps out of the window never to be seen again. In later versions the woman is replaced by a girl called Goldilocks, and eventually the bears take on the more friendly demeanour of Mama, Papa and Baby Bear.

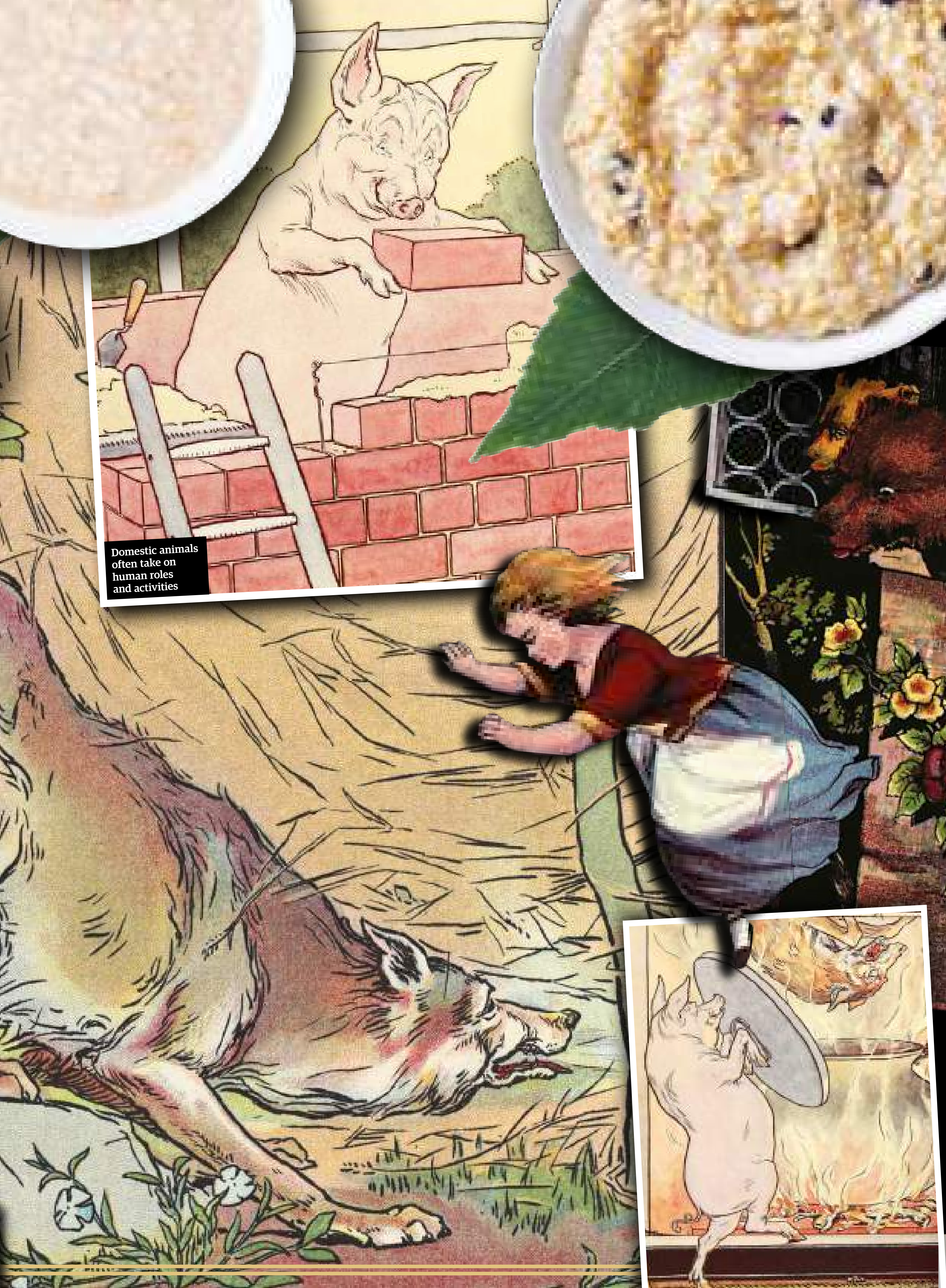
> Animals can be the main characters in a story, the hero's magical helpers, and occasionally even the villain, like the Big Bad Wolf





Food and shelter can be key themes in animal tales. Lost in the woods, Goldilocks is searching for both when she finds the Three Bears' cottage

The Three Bears were originally much scarier figures



Domestic animals often take on human roles and activities

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Magic

These feel like true fairytales and are the most recognisable of all the Index

Written by Rebecca Greig

Stories of magic and the supernatural can be found in this category and it is home to a number of tales that are likely to immediately pop into your head when thinking about fairytales. The sub categories include Supernatural Adversaries, Supernatural Helpers, Supernatural or Enchanted Wives or Other Relatives, Magic Objects, and Supernatural Power or Knowledge, as well as Other Tales of the Supernatural.

There stories contain ideas that can't be explained by earthly means. They feature the unexplainable, the mystical, the awe-inspiring, the implausible and the utterly magical.

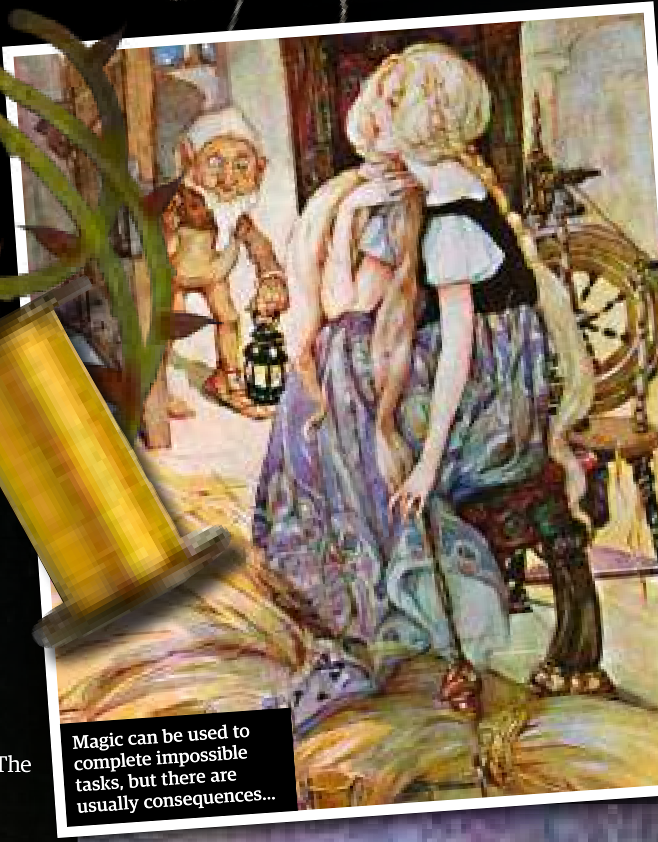
Rumplestiltskin (ATU 500) is a very popular German story told to children that was collected by the Brothers Grimm in the 1812 edition of *Children's and Household Tales*. Researchers say that the tale is actually around 4,000 years old. Other very recognisable stories in this category include *Aladdin* (ATU 561), *Tom Thumb* (ATU 700), *Snow White* (ATU 709) and *Rapunzel* (ATU 310). *Rapunzel* is another German tale recorded in the same edition of *Children's and Household Tales* as *Rumplestiltskin*. *Rapunzel* is about a girl with long hair that has been forced to live in a tower with no stairs by an evil witch called Dame Gothel. The witch says "Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair, so that I may climb thy golden stair," each time she visits.

Rapunzel falls in love with a prince who climbs up her hair to visit her; it is hinted in some versions that she falls pregnant. They make a plan to run away together, but when the witch finds out she cuts off Rapunzel's hair and throws her out into the wilderness. When the prince visits that night, the witch lets the severed hair down to haul him up. Gothel then shoves him from the tower and he falls into a thorn bush that blinds him.

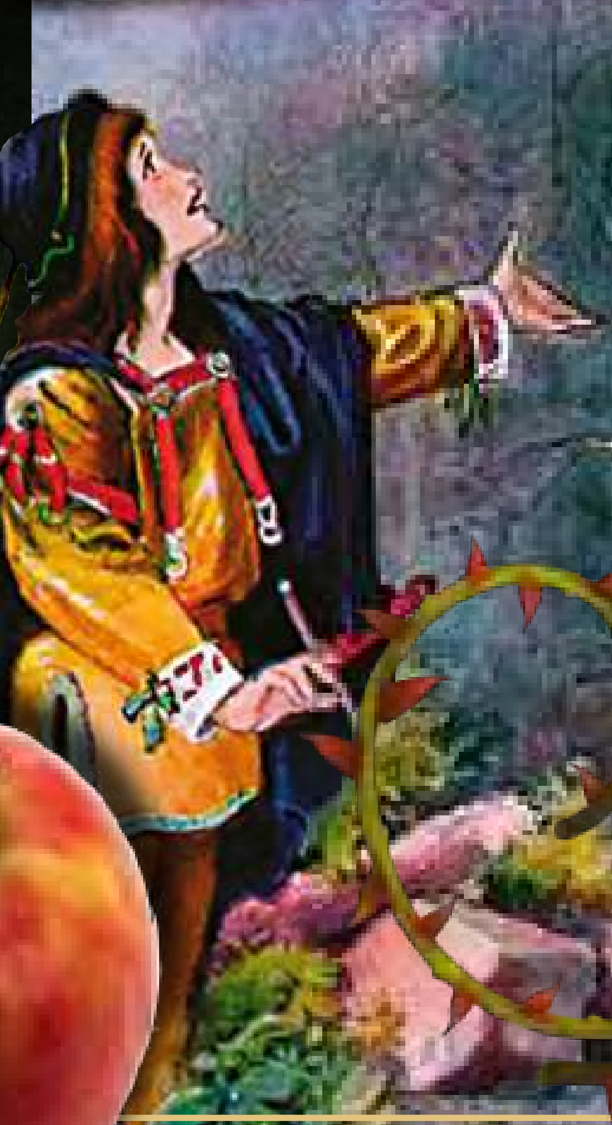
> Magical tales contain the most obvious fairytale motifs of enchantment, transformation, and otherworldly lands

The prince wanders the wilderness in search for his love, then one day he hears her sighing to the twins that she gave birth to. They are reunited in an emotional embrace and her tears magically restore his sight.

Other magical tales include *Twelve Dancing Princesses* and *Cap o'Rushes*.



Magic can be used to complete impossible tasks, but there are usually consequences...



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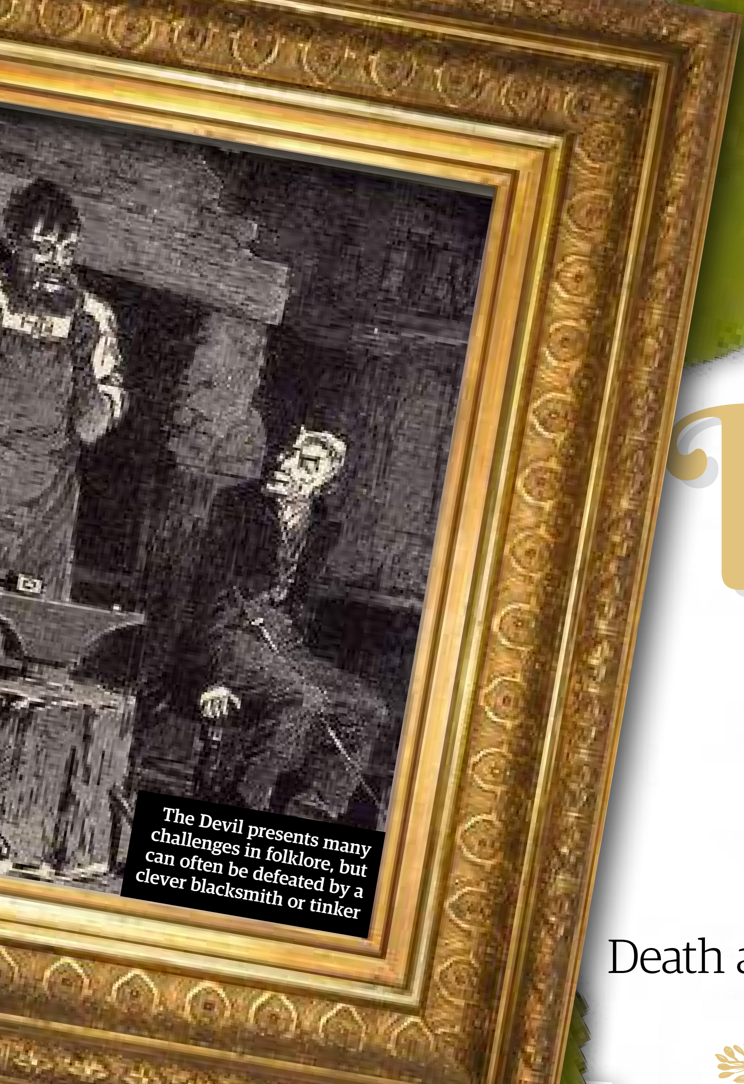
"Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair..."

Magical characters can change their appearance

Unusual physical characteristics can mark a character out

In *The Various Children of Eve*, the Biblical mother of humanity hides some of her children, causing some of them to miss an important divine blessing



The Devil presents many challenges in folklore, but can often be defeated by a clever blacksmith or tinker

Religious tales

Death and retribution riddle the tales in this category

Written by Rebecca Greig

Fairytales that include God and religion are split into five categories, which include God Rewards and Punishes, The Truth Comes To Light, Heaven, The Devil, and Other Religious Tales. These tales focus heavily on belief, fear, death and hope, and some were perhaps used as a way of explaining life after death, influenced by stories in the Bible and other faith teachings.

A Child Returns from the Dead (ATU 769), is a German tale recorded by the Brothers Grimm in 1812. It's about a stranger that sees a pale white child while dining with a family. The child walks in the door then through into another room. The stranger tells the family about the child but they do not see it. After this happens a few times the stranger follows the child and watches him digging and digging in another room. When he vanishes the stranger tells the family again about what is happening, to which the mother exclaims that it is her child that died four weeks ago. They go to search under the floor where the boy was digging and discover money hidden there that the mother had given him to give to a poor man. The child had kept the money for himself and now, in death, he couldn't rest. The family finally gifted the money to the poor and the ghost was never seen again. It is a story of righting a wrong and tells of a soul who couldn't rest in peace after committing a selfish deed.

> Religious tales often feature macabre consequences for hubris, avarice and other socially unacceptable sins

Other tales in this classification include *The Devil as Advocate* (ATU 812) which involves a thief being helped by the Devil. *Pride is Punished* (ATU 836) tells of a story of a man that boasts about God not having the power to make him poor. While he is at church his property is burned and he returns home a poor man. *The Various Children of Eve* is another Brothers Grimm tale. It tells a story of how Eve was ashamed of how many children she had so when God was due to visit, so she hid a lot of them. This meant not all of them received an important blessing from God, which is where differences in classes and peoples were said to arise from.

Ghosts are unquiet spirits: often a task needs to be performed for them before they can rest in peace

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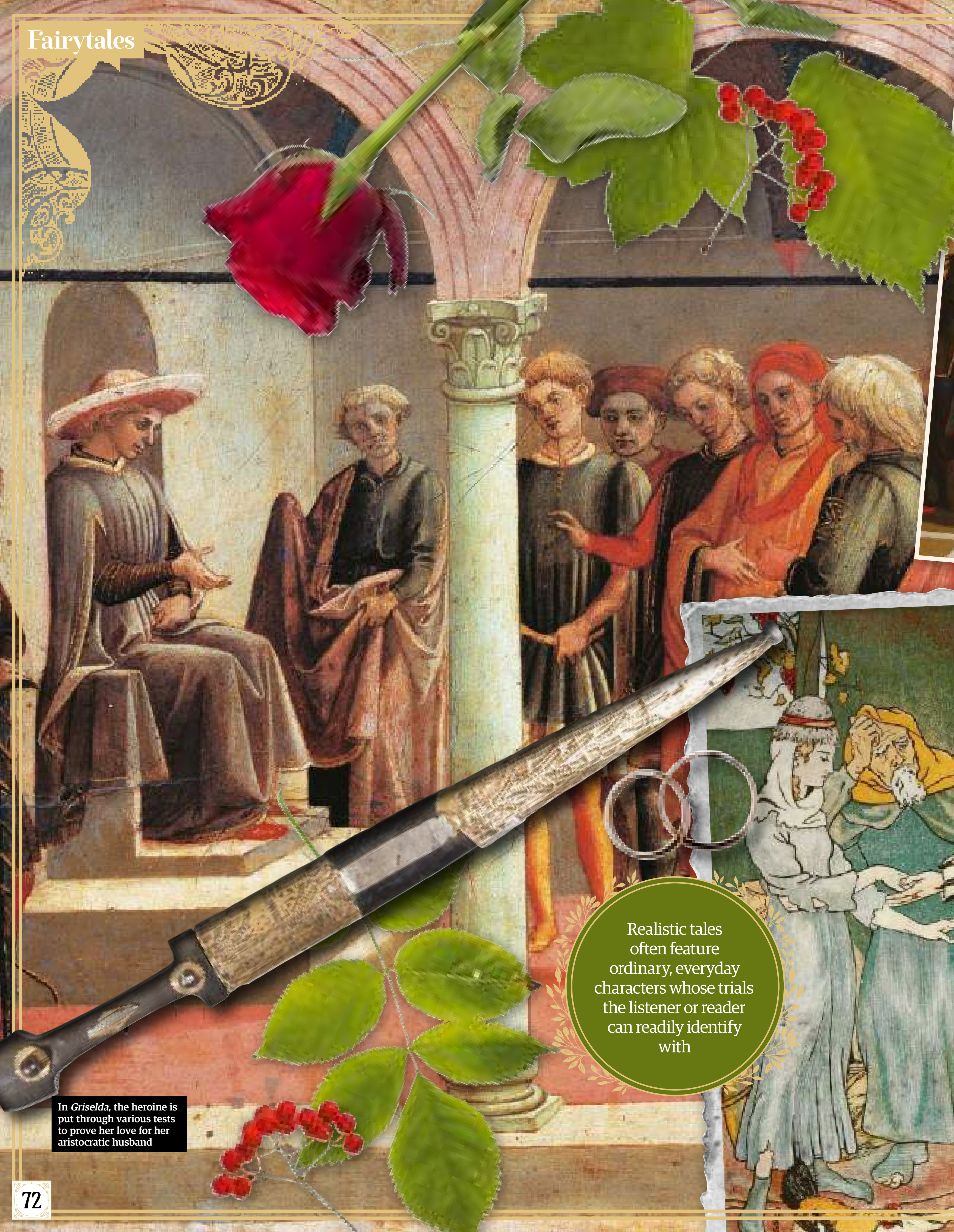
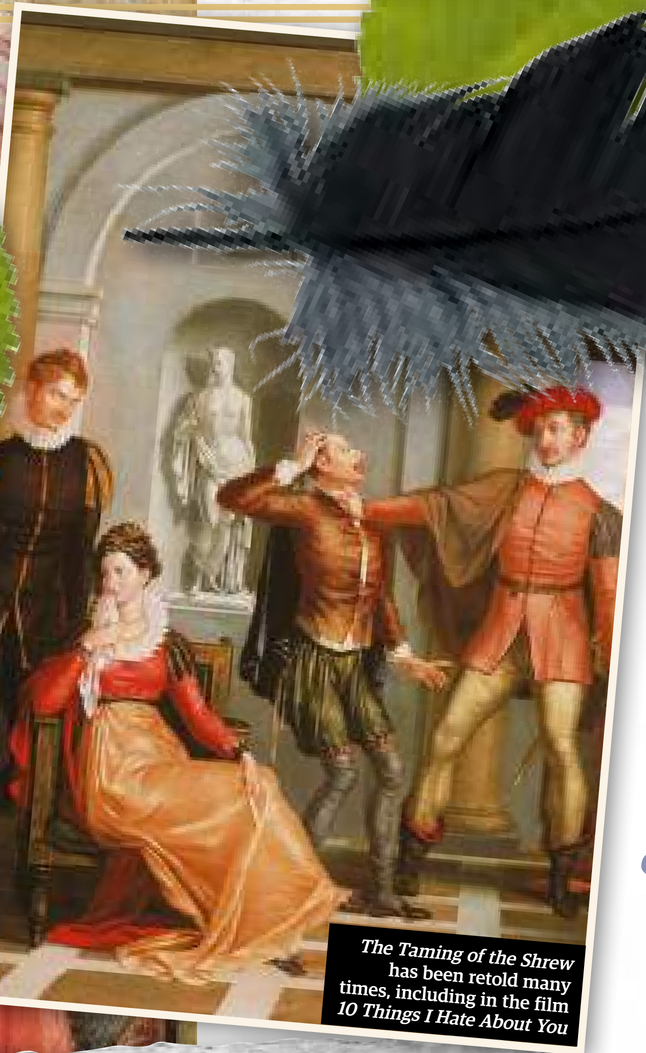


In *Griselda*, the heroine is put through various tests to prove her love for her aristocratic husband

> Realistic tales often feature ordinary, everyday characters whose trials the listener or reader can readily identify with



The Taming of the Shrew has been retold many times, including in the film *10 Things I Hate About You*

Realistic fairytales

These stories are grounded in reality

Written by Rebecca Greig

Realistic tales often have a happy ending - after the main character has been through hardships, that is

Forget magic and the supernatural, these tales are based on reality. They were probably told to teach life lessons and warn children of dangers. The sub-categories include The Man Marries the Princess, The Woman Marries the Prince, Proofs of Fidelity and Innocence, The Obstinate Wife Learns to Obey, Good Precepts, Clever Acts and Words, Tales of Fate, Robbers and Murderers and the precisely named Other Realistic Tales.

Griselda (ATU 887) is a peculiar story of patience and tolerance. It's a very old fairytale dating back to 1350 and was written by Giovanni Boccaccio. Griselda marries the Marquis of Saluzzo and he tests her in various ways. First he threatens to put their two children to death, but she gives them up without protest. Instead of killing them he sends them to live in Bologna. Later he publicly declares divorce and Griselda moves in with her father. Years later he announces that he is to marry a 12-year-old girl (socially acceptable among the aristocracy of the time), and Griselda wishes them well. The Marquis then reveals that the young girl is actually their daughter, and Griselda is restored to her place as wife and mother.

Other tales include *The Taming of the Shrew* (ATU 901). In the version of the tale by George Dasent, there was a king with a daughter who had an uncontrollable tongue. The king said that whoever managed to cope with the princess could marry her, and claim half of the kingdom. Three brothers heard about this and tried their luck, however the two eldest could not cope. The third and the youngest set out on a quest to succeed. On his way to the palace he collected various items that he found, including a broken plate, a dead magpie, and a worn out old shoe. When he arrived he tried to humour the princess, to which she replied: "I think you must have come here to wear out my tongue with your nonsense."

"No, I have not," said the lad; "but this is worn out," as he pulled out the shoe-sole. To this the princess had nothing to say, and so the youngest brother married her and claimed half the kingdom. Realistic tales, despite their category, often feature the kind of rags-to-riches, happy-ever-after endings so popular in movies today.

> "They were probably told to teach life lessons and warn children of dangers"

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Tales of the Stupid Ogre

Even monsters can be overcome

Written by Rebecca Greig

Tales of the Stupid Ogre features sub-categories including Labour Contract, Partnership Between Men and Ogre, Contest Between Men and Ogre, Man Kills (Injures) Ogre, Ogre Frightened by Man, Man Outwits the Devil, and Souls saved from the Devil. Don't just picture Shrek when you think of this part of the Index; it also includes stories of the devil and other, real or mythical beasts.

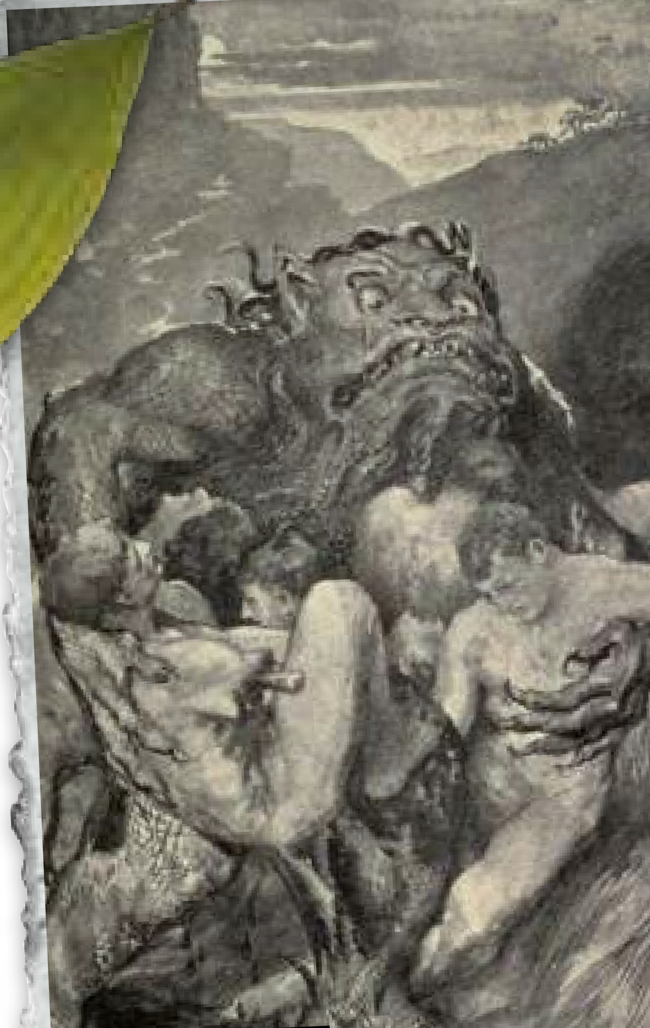
The Bear Trainer and his Cat (1161 ATU), under the Man Outwits the Devil category, is an amusing tale. One Norwegian version from 1859 by Asbjørnsen & Moe / George Dasent, called *The Cat on the Dovrefjell*, is about a man who finds a big white bear that he wants to take to the King of Denmark. On his way he stops at a small house and asks a man named Halvor if he can have a room. Halvor complains that they have no space because every Christmas Eve trolls come down and force them to leave. The man isn't afraid and says he'd still like a room and that his bear will sleep under the stove.

When the trolls arrive they devour a great feast. One troll spots the bear and says "Pussy, will you have some sausage?". The bear rises up, growls, and hunts them out of the house, causing the trolls to flee.

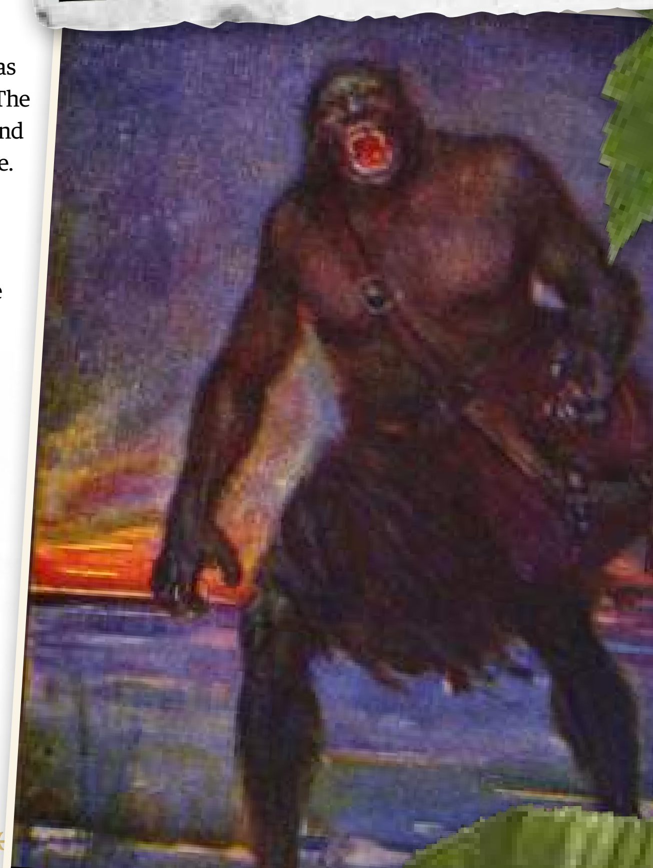
The next year Halvor expected the trolls to arrive again. He heard a voice while he was cutting wood, which said "Have you got your big cat with you still?" He said yes and that she had since had seven kittens all even more terrifying than her, to which the troll replied "Oh, then, we'll never come to see you again!" Sure enough, Halvor was never bothered by the trolls ever again.

> Ogre tales often demonstrate how monsters can be overcome through cleverness, trickery or guile

> "Don't just picture Shrek when you think of this part of the Index"



Ogres are often depicted as bloodthirsty and hungry for human flesh, but despite their size they can be outwitted



The monster Grendel in the epic Anglo-Saxon poem *Beowulf* is one of the original ogre-tale motifs

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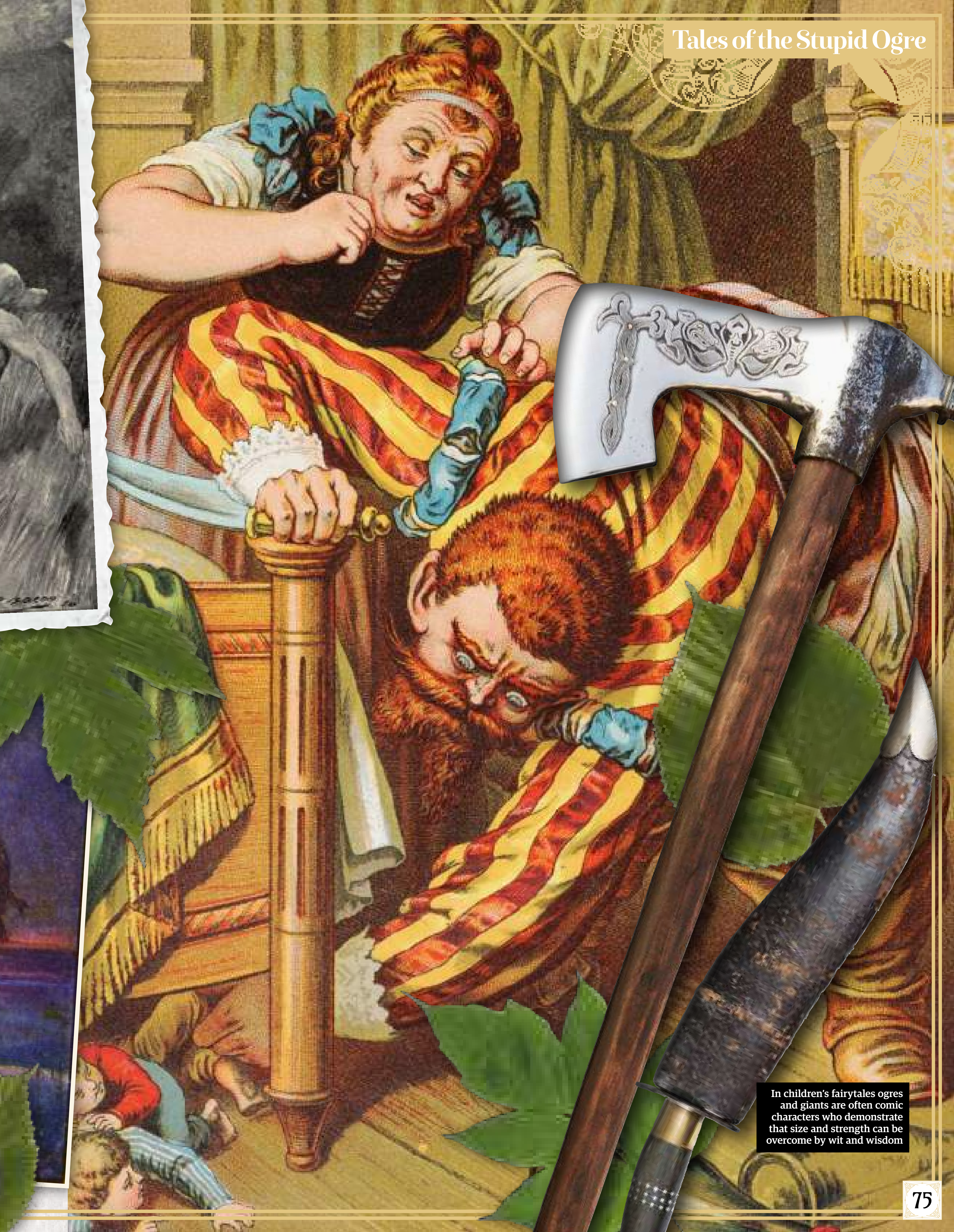
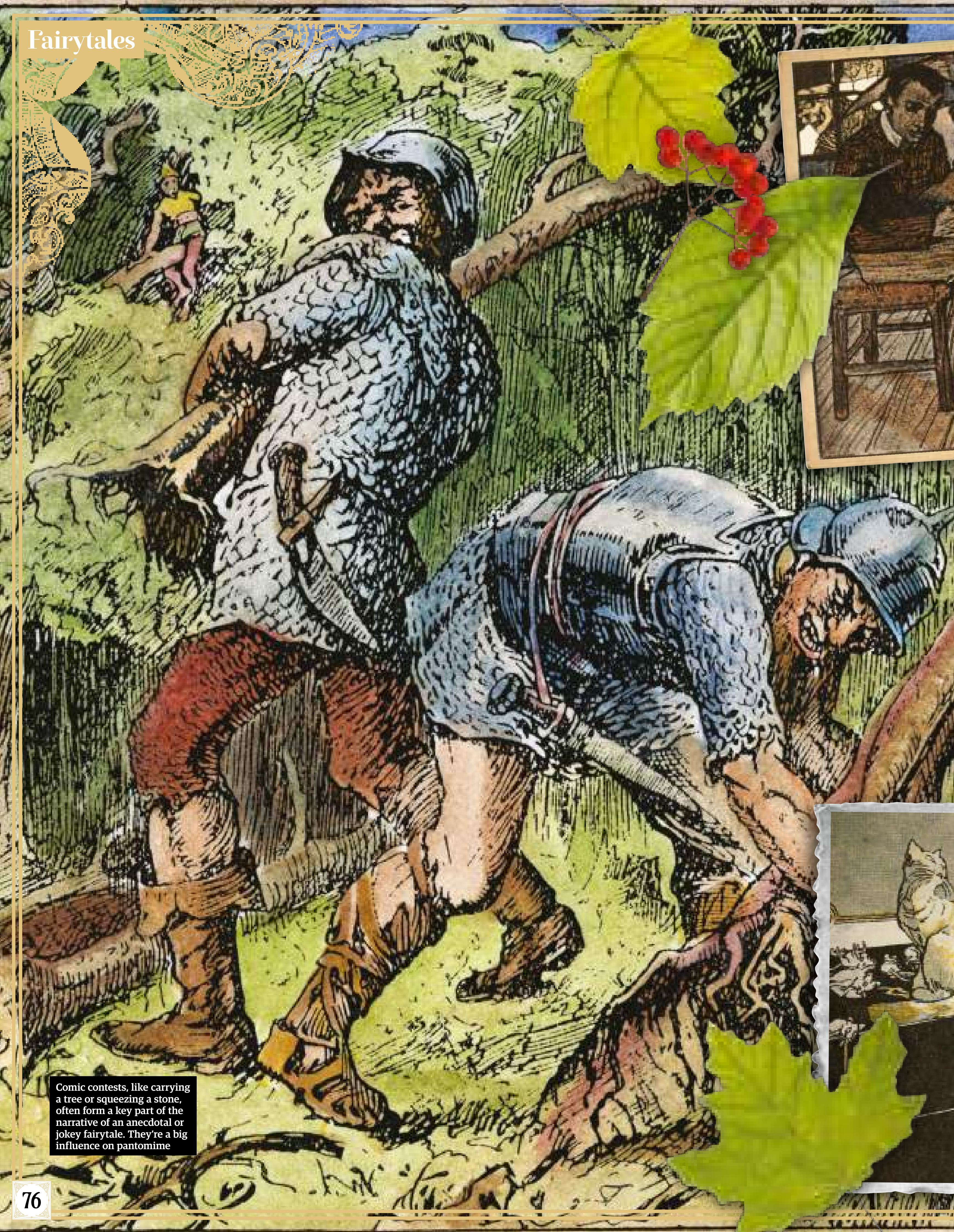
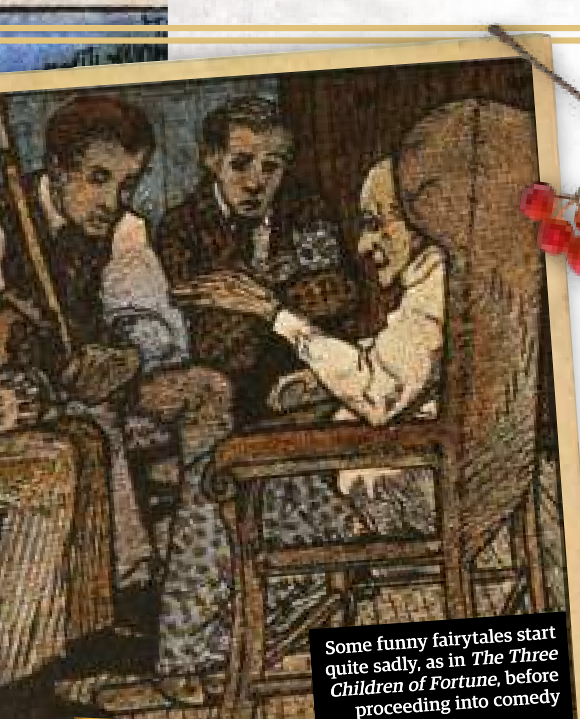


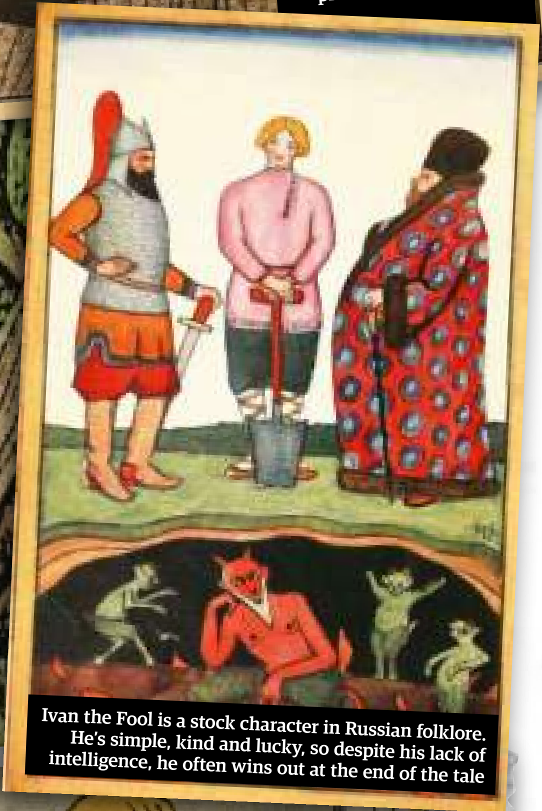
In children's fairytales ogres and giants are often comic characters who demonstrate that size and strength can be overcome by wit and wisdom



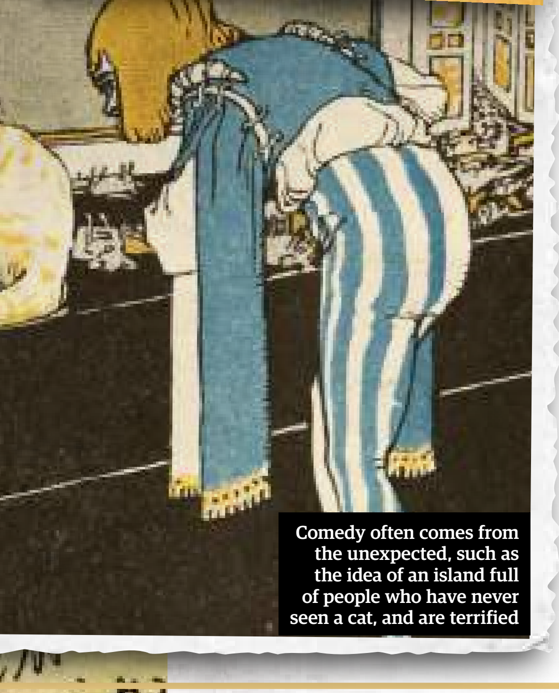
Comic contests, like carrying a tree or squeezing a stone, often form a key part of the narrative of an anecdotal or jokey fairytale. They're a big influence on pantomime



Some funny fairytales start quite sadly, as in *The Three Children of Fortune*, before proceeding into comedy



Ivan the Fool is a stock character in Russian folklore. He's simple, kind and lucky, so despite his lack of intelligence, he often wins out at the end of the tale



Comedy often comes from the unexpected, such as the idea of an island full of people who have never seen a cat, and are terrified

Anecdotes and jokes

Amusing tales and interesting stories fill this part of the Index

Written by Rebecca Greig

The Anecdotes and Jokes category is probably the longest list of fairytales. The sub-categories include Stories about a Fool, Stories about Married Couples, The Foolish Wife and her Husband, The Foolish Husband and his Wife, The Foolish Couple, Stories about a Woman, Looking for a Wife, Jokes about Old Maids, Stories about a Man, The Clever Man, Lucky Accidents, The Stupid Man, Jokes and Clergymen and Religious Figures, The Clergyman is Tricked, Clergyman and Sexton, Other jokes about Religious Figures, Anecdotes about Other Groups of People, and Tall Tales.

Three Children of Fortune (1650 ATU) is a Brothers Grimm fairytale. It's a story about three boys that were gifted a cockerel, a scythe and a cat on their father's deathbed. He told them he knew they didn't seem like much but they were to seek out a place in which each thing was valuable in order to make their fortunes. When he died the eldest set out with his cockerel on a quest to find those that it would be valuable to. The quest seemed destined to fail, until after trying many places without success, eventually he found an island that had never seen a cockerel before. The islanders were awed and the brother left with a great fortune.

The second brother had a similar journey and he too eventually found an island in need of a scythe. It allowed the island's people to farm their corn safely, and he too left with a fortune. The third brother again struggled to find anywhere that didn't have cats already. Eventually he found an island that was plagued with mice. He left with a fortune while the cat set out to kill the mice. The king and people of the island became frightened of soon became frightened of the cat though, and tried to run it out of the palace. Eventually they set their own cannons on the palace, but the cat escaped out of a window and the palace burned to the ground.

> Lighthearted tales like this are great examples of the kind of fireside stories that would have been told to entertain the whole family

The Brave Little Tailor is another Brothers Grimm fairytale. The tailor is a clever and intelligent character that uses misdirection and cunning to trick other characters. The story also includes type 1060 ATU, Squeezing Water from a Stone; 1062 ATU, A Contest in Throwing Stones; 1052 ATU, A Contest in Carrying a Tree; 1051 ATU, Springing with a Bent Tree; and type 1115 ATU, Attempting to Kill the Hero in his Bed.

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Formula tales

It's all about structure and predictability in this part of the Index

Written by Rebecca Greig

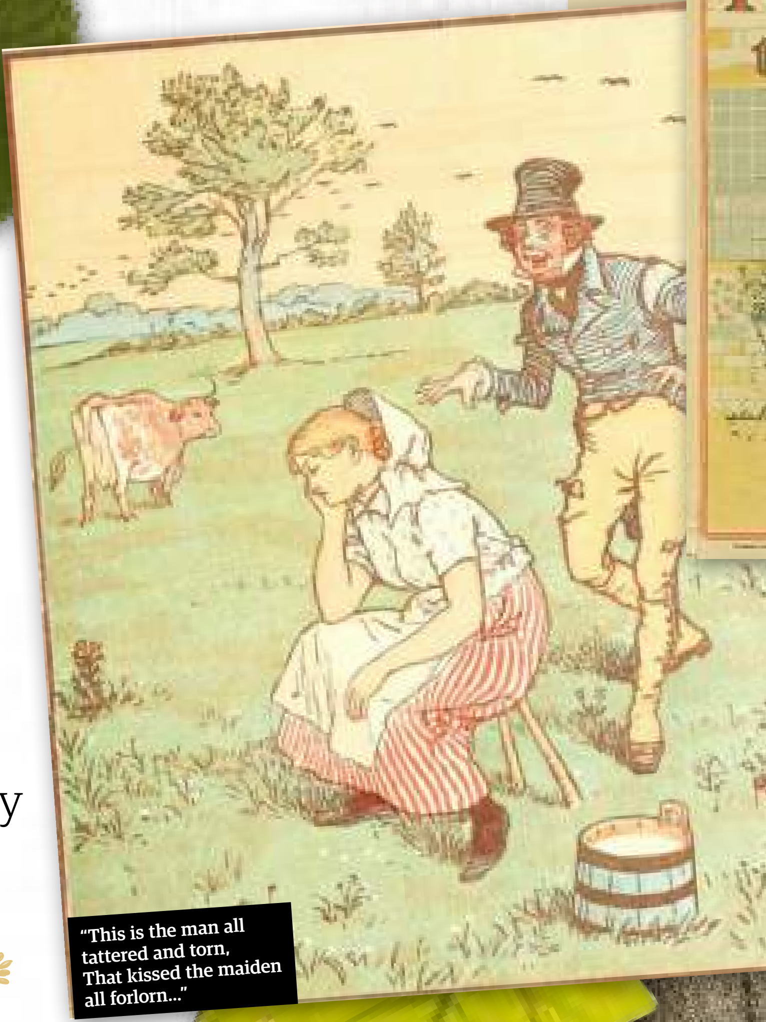
The fairytales in the Formula part of the Index have sub-categories that include Cumulative Tales, Catch Tales and Other Formula Tales. Formula tales are structured so that that their ending and storylines are extremely predictable. They follow repetitive patterns and recognisable plots that make it easy to foresee the eventual ending.

The Nanny that Would not go Home by Asbjørnsen & Moe / HL Brækstad is a Norwegian version of a story under The Goat Would Not Go Home (2015 ATU) category. It's a repetitive story about a boy called Epsen who is trying to persuade his goat to come home for supper so he can eat. The goat refuses, so his mother tells him to ask the fox for help. The fox says no, so he asks the wolf, who also says no. He goes on the ask a mouse, a smith, an axe, the yoke, the ox, the water, the fire, the fir, the Finn and the bear, who all say no they will not help him. Finally he asks the cat.

"The lad went to the cat. "My dear cat, catch the mouse, for the mouse won't gnaw the rope, the rope won't hang the smith, the smith won't hammer the axe, the axe won't split the yoke, the yoke won't throttle the ox, the ox won't drink the water, the water won't quench the fire, the fire won't burn the fir, the fir won't crush the Finn, the Finn won't shoot the bear, the bear won't slay the wolf, the wolf won't tear the fox, the fox won't bite Nanny, and Nanny won't come home in time. I am so hungry and want my supper."' She agrees if he gives her milk for her kittens, which he does, so she catches the mouse, who gnaws the rope, and so on until the fox bites the goat and the boy can go home!

Children love the easy-to-predict rhythms and patterns of formula tales, so they're often incorporated into nursery rhymes

"They follow repetitive patterns that make it easy to see the ending"

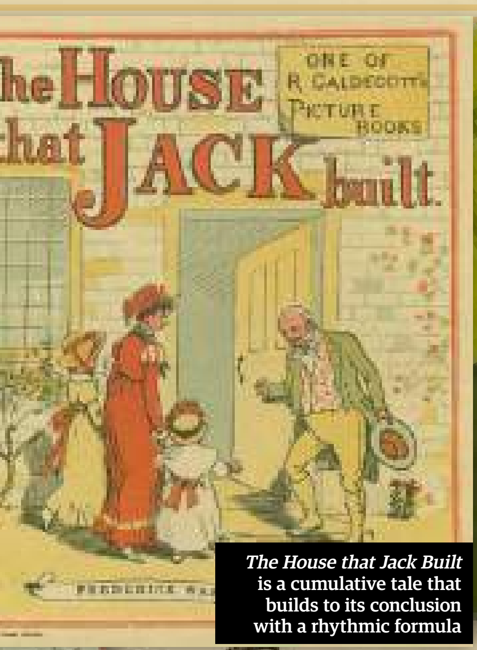


"This is the man all tattered and torn, That kissed the maiden all forlorn..."

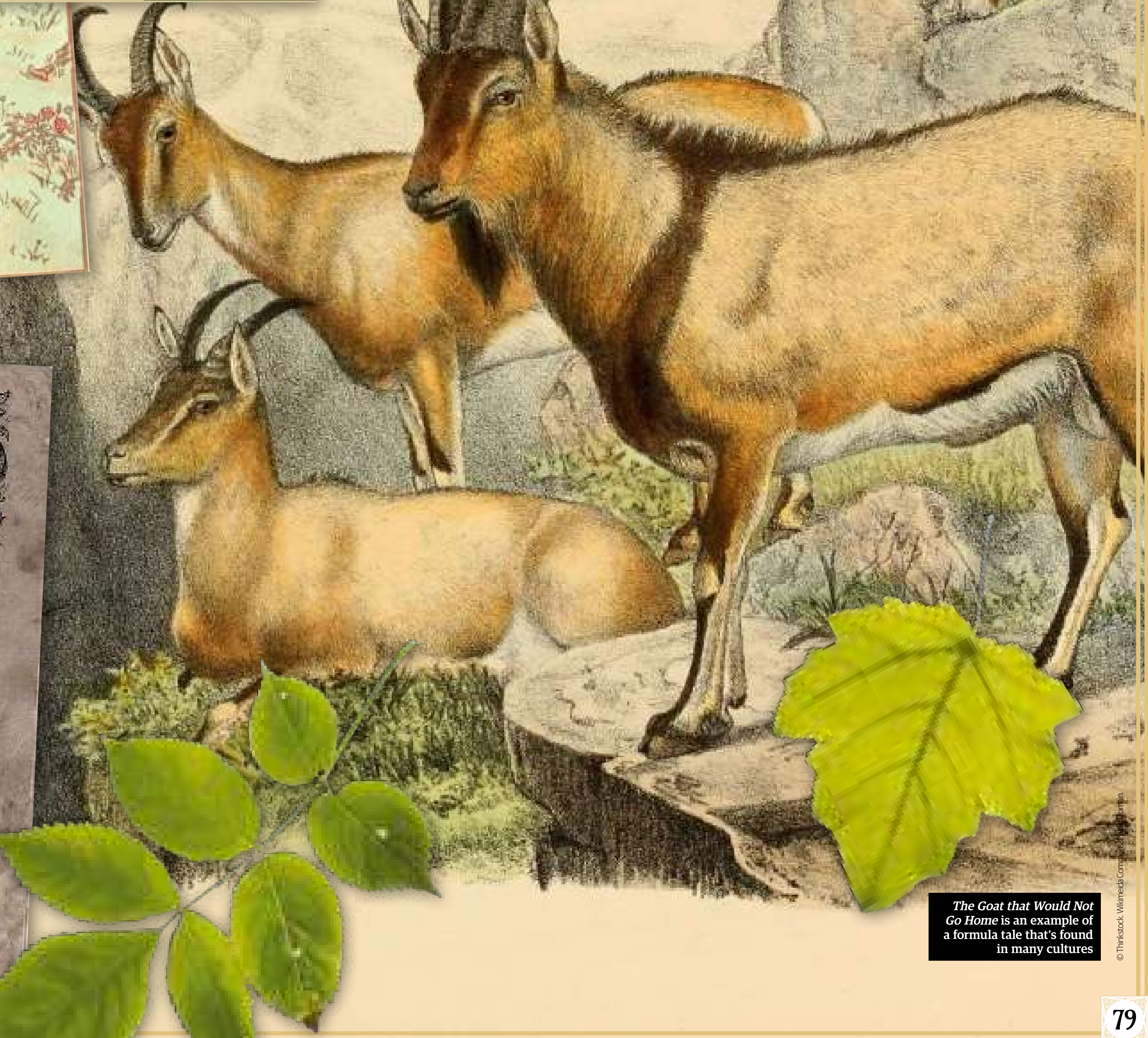
REMARKABLE
STORY
OF
CHICKEN
LITTLE.

PUBLISHED BY
J. G. CHANDLER,
ROXBURY, Mass.

Chicken Little, or *Chicken Licken*, is a cumulative tale about a small chick who believes the sky is falling in

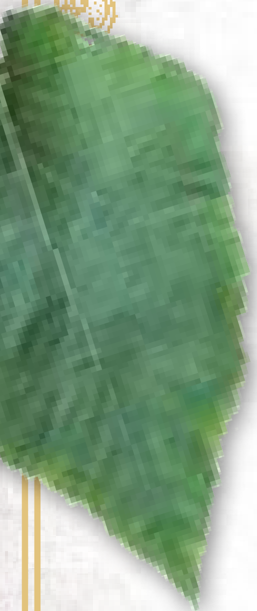

he HOUSE
hat JACK built
ONE OF R. CALDECOTT'S PICTURE BOOKS

The House that Jack Built is a cumulative tale that builds to its conclusion with a rhythmic formula



The Goat that Would Not Go Home is an example of a formula tale that's found in many cultures

© Thinkstock. Wikimeida Commons; Public Domain.



Fairytale archetypes

Why do the folk in fairytales fit into universal roles? And what do these characters tell us about ourselves?

Written by Ben Gazur

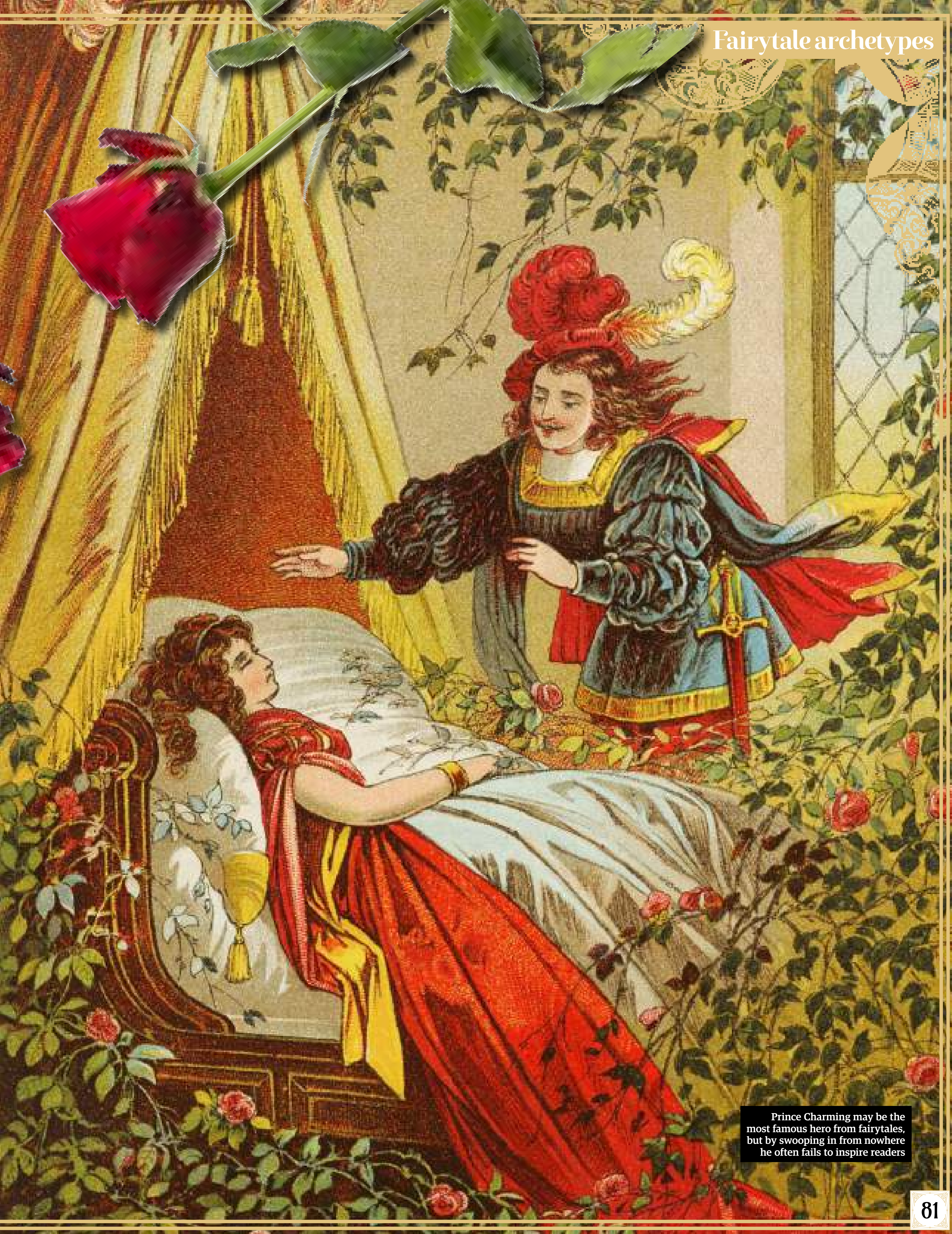
Fairytales, more than any other literary genre, rely on the use of archetypes. Archetypes are things and characters that occur again and again in fiction. They are categories that can be used to construct a tale such as 'hero is challenged by a villain and must defeat him by finding a magical weapon'. We all instinctively recognise a hero and a villain when we see them. By using characters that fit into universal patterns, the creators of fairytales are able to make their stories accessible to everyone.

While the narratives in fairytales can be very similar, it is the characters that we will be examining here. In the actantial model, stories can be broken down into the roles that the characters fulfil. An actant is not just who a character is but what they do. In the course of a fairytale, one person may change their role over time. Rumpelstiltskin goes from playing the role of a helper when he spins hay into gold to taking on the role of a villain when he demands the heroine's firstborn child as the price of his aid. Folklorists such as Vladimir Propp, who identified seven key actants in the fairy stories he studied, have tried to uncover the root archetypes in these stories. Debate still rages over how to quantify and categorise the characters in fairytales, but it is possible to see how they have developed and been interpreted over time.

The hero

Perhaps the most basic archetype in all literature is the hero. While heroism is not gender-specific, it is useful to separate heroes and heroines when considering fairytales because of the different treatments male and female protagonists have traditionally been given in them. Male heroes have a long lineage in folk literature, stretching back to the earliest surviving tale, the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, where the hero must overcome monsters and travel to the ends of the Earth. Yet Gilgamesh is described as two-thirds divine, and the heroes of fairytales are most often everyman characters who we are able to more closely identify with. In the land of fairytales, any person may rise to the challenges life throws at them.

In 2016, researchers studied fairytales to try to ascertain their age. By subjecting the stories to analysis, they could follow how tales had spread and mutated over time. Their conclusion was that one of the oldest stories was that of *The Smith and the Devil*. One day, a smith is working in his forge and a demon appears offering him knowledge in exchange for his soul. The smith trades his soul for the ability to weld any two materials together.



Prince Charming may be the most famous hero from fairytales, but by swooping in from nowhere he often fails to inspire readers

When the demon agrees, the smith uses his new skill to weld the demon to a tree. Unable to escape, the devil must return the smith's soul. While the details of the story differ between cultures, the researchers found commonalities that led them to believe this story developed 6,000 years ago. In this ancient tale, we see the hero as a clever person who uses trickery to win the day. This type of hero triumphs through quick thinking rather than strength of arms. *The Brave Little Tailor* defeats a pair of giants by tossing pebbles at them in the night to rouse them into fighting each other.

While tales of clever heroes amuse us, they cannot inspire us if we are not as naturally quick as them. Luckily, there is a whole genre of stories filled with foolish heroes. In 'Jack' stories, a guileless bumbler wanders through an adventure and everything turns out well. In *Jack and the Beanstalk*, an idiotic trade of magic beans for a cow sees Jack escaping a giant's home with a goose that lays golden eggs and an enchanted harp. In Russian tales of *Ivan the Fool*, the hero's simple nature and general kindness to the world lead him, via amusing blunders, to huge rewards. It is not always the wittiest or the strongest that wins out in the end.

When a prince appears in a fairytale, he is often the reward for a heroine. In some, the prince is disguised by a spell or curse, such as in *The Frog Prince* or *Beauty and the Beast*, and the heroine must overcome her disgust for his appearance. Variants, like *The Pig King* from Italy and *The Snake Prince* from India, show how popular the idea of internal nobility is.

Prince Charming is the very opposite of the foolish hero. Where the fool is often a homely

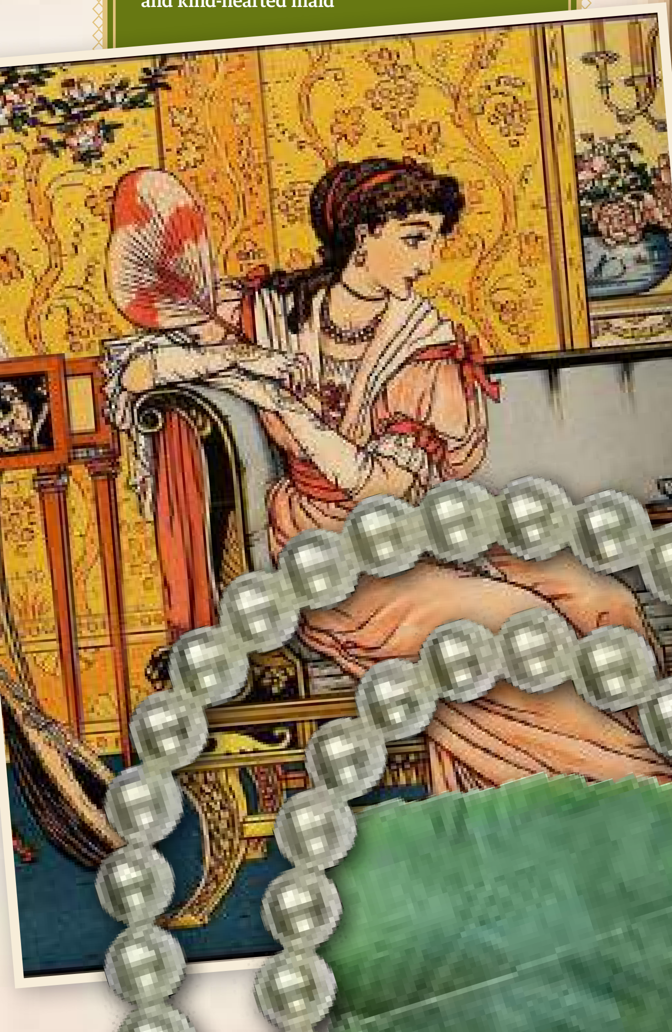
Some fairytale archetypes and stock characters date back thousands of years and exist across multiple cultures worldwide

The wicked Princess Fiorimonde

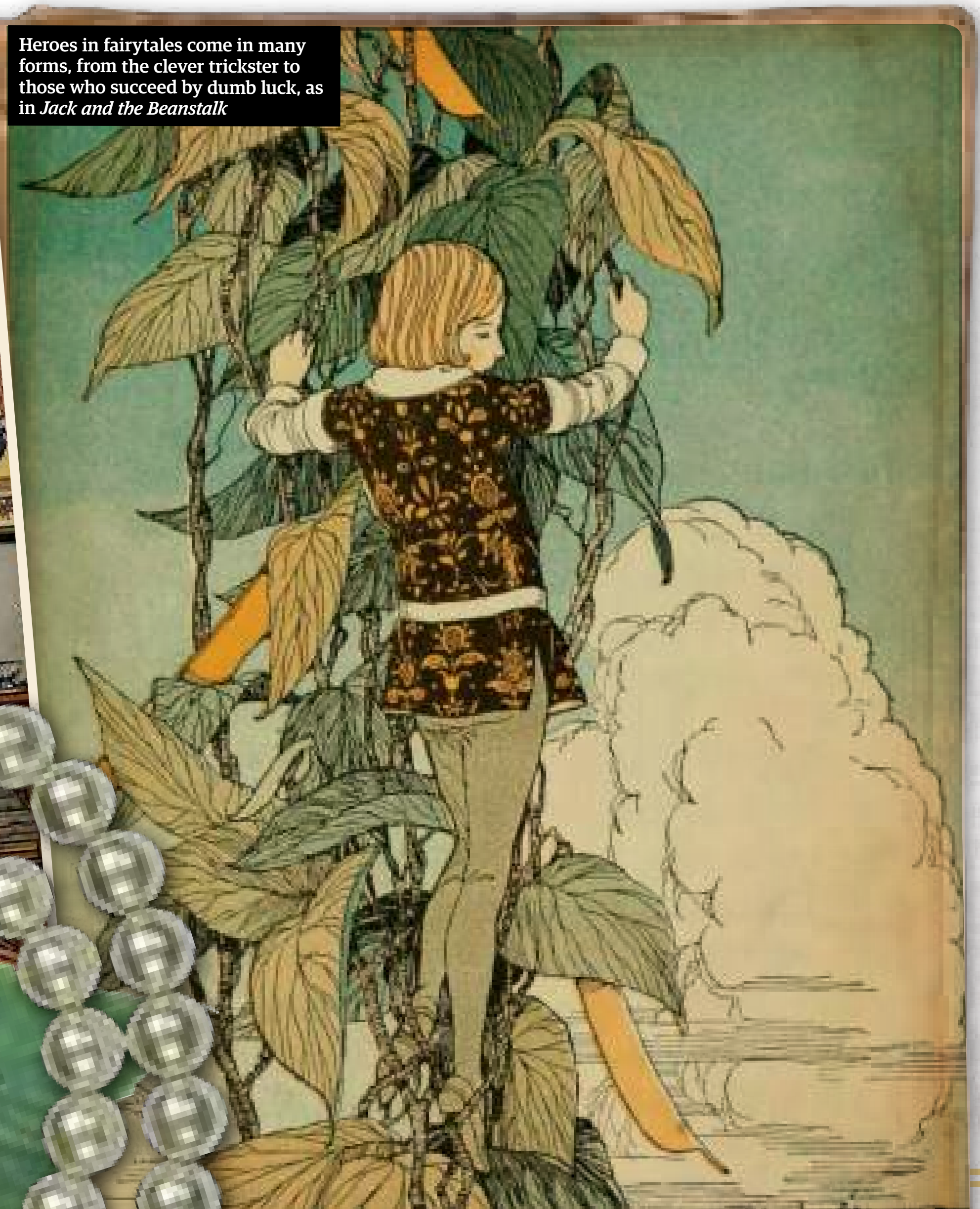
Beauty may be in the eye of the beholder, but in fairytales the holder of beauty is almost always a good person. When there is goodness in their soul, it shines out and will be rewarded by the universe. *The Necklace of Princess Fiorimonde* presents a subversion of this trope.

Princess Fiorimonde is the most beautiful woman in the world, and only gets more ravishing with each year. Yet at night, she travels to the hut of a ghastly old witch and practises the blackest of arts to achieve this beauty. When her father, the king, sets out to find her a husband, she fears her time as a witch is up and that her face will wither. So she wears a simple strand of gold around her neck that, if anyone is foolish enough to place their fingers around it, will transform them into a bead. The suitors come, and Fiorimonde gets them to touch her necklace, which soon droops under the weight of captured would-be husbands.

Only the quick thinking of the princess's maid saves the day. Fiorimonde becomes ensnared in her own necklace and hung up as a warning of the cost of black magic.



Princess Fiorimonde captured 12 suitors in her necklace, but was undone by her clever and kind-hearted maid



Heroes in fairytales come in many forms, from the clever trickster to those who succeed by dumb luck, as in *Jack and the Beanstalk* younger son of no prospects, Prince Charming has all the gifts that nature can bestow. Prince Charming swoops in to rescue female protagonists when no one else can. In *Cinderella*, or *Snow White*, or *Sleeping Beauty*, the handsome royal is so idealised that he is often given no name – he simply is a prince and very charming. While these princes do save the day, they fail to fulfil the role of hero because it is impossible to identify with these stock characters. Modern retellings of fairytales or films set in fairytale worlds often satirise Prince Charmings as vapid, moronic and dull.

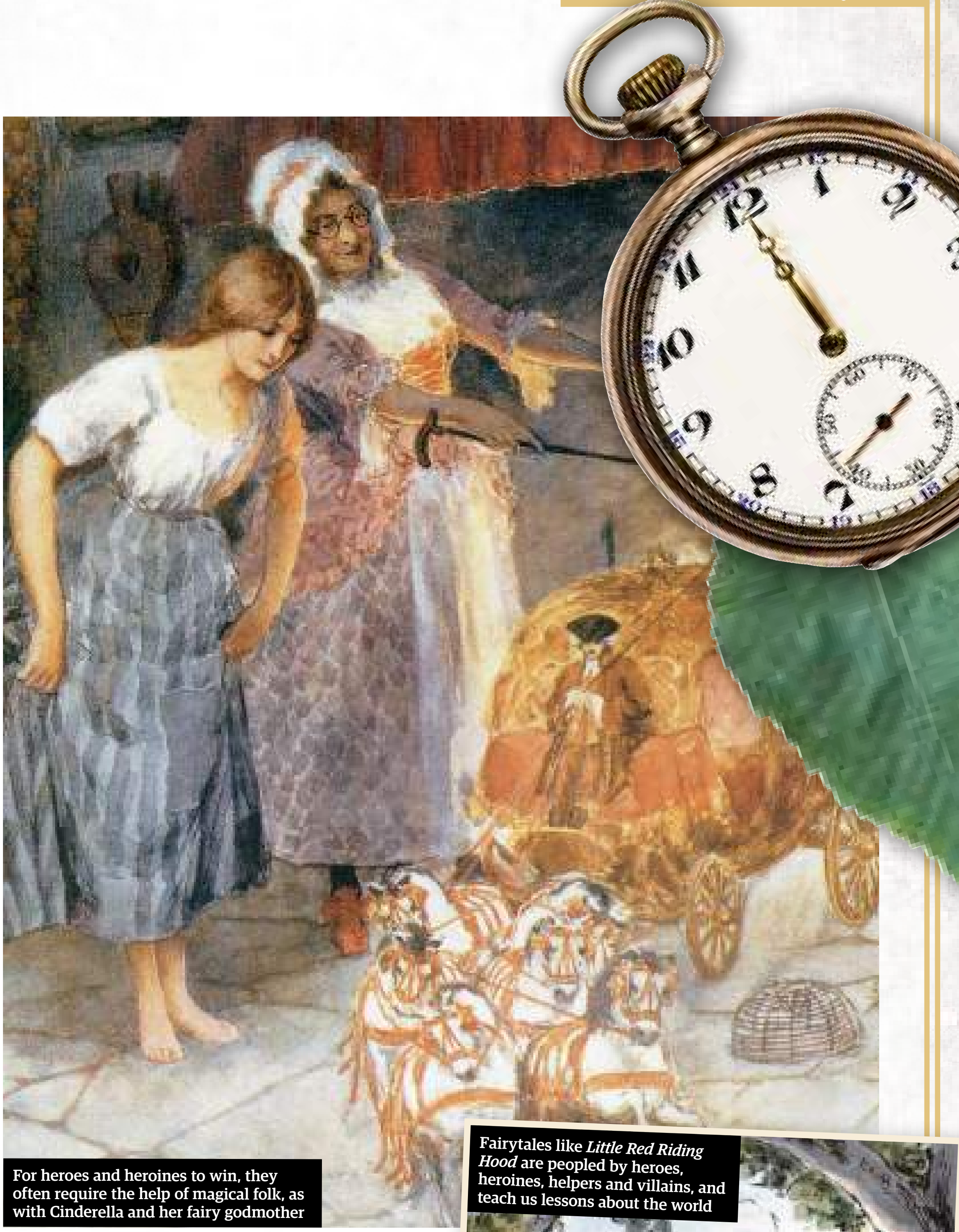
The heroine

When research recently revealed that two thirds of parents have never read classic fairytales to their children, a response online was "…maybe society has moved away from stories about waiting for some man to come save some princess in distress?" This ignores the rich history of fairytales that do feature strong, intelligent and brave heroines, yet there is some truth in the stereotype.

Little Red Riding Hood is the classic tale told to stop children wandering off alone. A little girl doing her filial duty in feeding an elderly grandmother is led astray from her task by a wolf who eats first the old lady and then the girl. Some versions of the tale end there, though others have an axeman come to save the day by chopping open the wolf to free the pair.

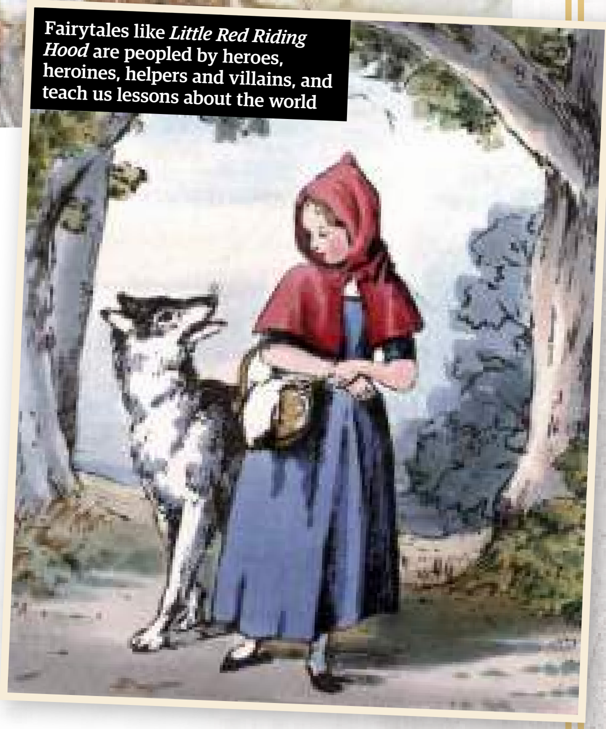
Other well-known tales have similar simple morals for children. Cinderella is the heroine as a persecuted sufferer. Through circumstances beyond her control, she is put upon by her stepmother and stepsisters and forced to act as their servant. Throughout, she maintains her innate kindliness until rewarded by a fairy godmother and eventually by a prince who sees her true value. In a Chinese version from the 9th century CE a girl called Ye Xian befriends a fish who is sent by her mother's ghost. Her stepmother and stepsisters kill the fish but Ye Xian uses its magic bones to dress magnificently for a celebration. Forced to flee, she loses one of the slippers. The king finds the small size of the lost slipper enchanting, and searches for the lady with such small feet. Eventually, Ye Xian is found and married to the king. The (painful) Chinese practice of binding women's feet to ensure they remained tiny is probably at the root of this tale.

The enchanted princess is another heroine often seen in fairytales. Sleeping Beauty in the original fairytale plays almost no role in the action of the tale. Things happen around her until a curse is activated and she falls into an endless sleep that can only be broken by a kiss. In one early version of the tale she is impregnated and bears twins while still asleep, and is only awakened when one of her children sucks an enchanted splinter from her finger.



For heroes and heroines to win, they often require the help of magical folk, as with Cinderella and her fairy godmother

It is wrong to cast all female characters in fairy stories as either weak or villainous, though. Not everyone is a damsel in need of rescue. In *The Snake Prince* from India, a snake is magically transformed into a prince. When he marries, he reveals that he will be returned to his venomous serpent form unless his wife is able to face the Queen of Snakes without feeling any fear. When she manages this act of bravery, she wins her husband a human form forever. Steadfastness in the face of death is one of the hallmarks of a hero. In *The Twelve Brothers*, the heroine maintains a vow of silence for seven years in order to save her brothers, unwilling to scream even as a pyre is kindled to burn her.



Fairytales like *Little Red Riding Hood* are peopled by heroes, heroines, helpers and villains, and teach us lessons about the world

Just as the clever, wily hero is a common trope in fiction, so are ingenious heroines. In *Fitcher's Bird* a sorcerer abducts young women to be his bride. After killing her two older sisters, the wizard attempts his seduction with the heroine of the tale. She finds her sisters' dismembered corpses and reassembles them, bringing them to life. The youngest sister then escapes in the guise of a fitcher's bird (a term with no obvious meaning) by attaching feathers to herself with honey. Once out, she rouses her family who consequently return to burn the sorcerer and all of his wedding guests in his house. It is a comforting fact of fairytales that villains will always get their just deserts in the end.

Some characters can embody multiple archetypes within the course of a single tale, even going from helper to villain

Villains

Without a villain, most fairytales would be boring indeed. A hero needs a foe to overcome. By examining who is cast as the evildoer in fairytales, we can learn a lot about the cultures that tell those stories. In several Grimm stories, the enemy is a Jew, and some suspect that the slow-witted trolls of Norwegian tales (who flee from the sound of church bells) reference those Scandinavian people who did not convert to Christianity. While such stereotypes must be confronted, luckily they are not common in fairytales.

Outsiders make good villains because they reinforce the structure of a community. Witches and sorcerers use supernatural powers to bend the world to their will, and in fairytales it is often the hero's job to break their powers. The wicked witch can be found in many stories. In *Hansel and Gretel*, she lures young people by offering them everything that starving children could want: life in a gingerbread house. Instead of sugar-induced diabetes, the children are threatened with death through roasting. Gretel tricks the witch into leaning into her own oven, and pushes her in, leaving – as the Grimm version of this tale says – "the ungodly creature to be burned to ashes."

Hansel and Gretel is also a good introduction to the fairytale villain of the 'wicked stepmother'. Often a villain is a person in power who abuses those under them, and who is more helpless than a child placed under the power of an outsider? In *Hansel and Gretel*, it is the stepmother who, somehow, convinces the father that the only way for the family to survive is to abandon the children in a dark forest. Similar figures appear in many tales to suggest that only a real mother can love her children.

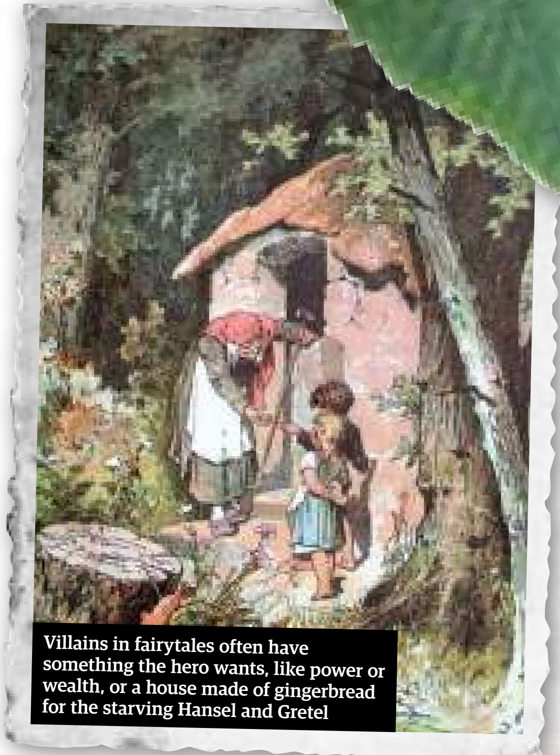
As a stepmother is supposed to care for her family, so kings and queens were expected to care for the kingdom. When they failed, they fell into the role of the evil monarch. Worst were those monarchs who could not even care for their family. In *The King Who Wished to Marry His Daughter*, a widower king promises not to marry until he can find someone who will fit into his dead queen's clothes. When their daughter grows up and tries on a dress, to avoid an incestuous union, she must flee. But it seems that evil queens are far more numerous in fairytales than kings.

To make a character as bad as possible, often different varieties of villainy are united in one person. In *Snow White*, the villain is an evil stepmother, queen, and possessor of magical tools. When her stepdaughter surpasses her in beauty, the queen's only remedy is to send a huntsman to cut out her heart. Snow White is rescued from suspended animation by a prince, and the queen is punished by dancing herself to death in red-hot metal shoes.

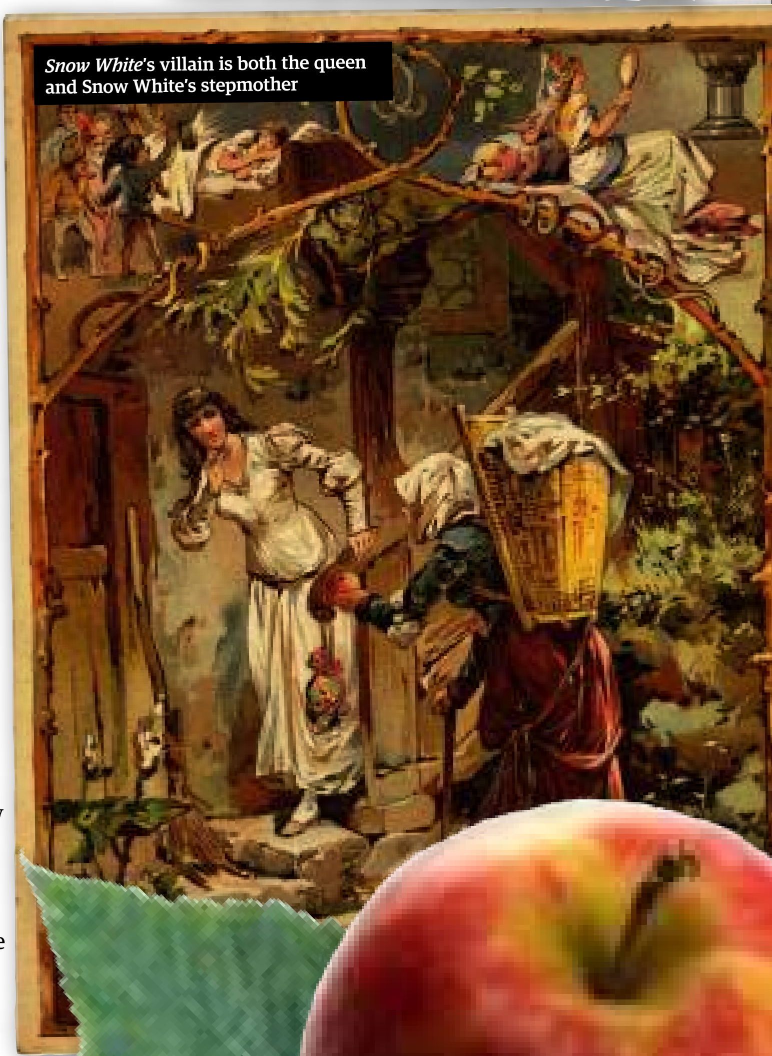
It is not necessary for the foe in a fairytale to be human. In stories populated entirely by animals, like *The Three Little Pigs*, it makes internal sense for their opponent to be another animal. In *Little Red Riding Hood*, the Big Bad Wolf can be seen as a stand-in for the threat that nature can offer to those who pass beyond the safety of the town or village. If the evil animal is magical, then it can play a dual role in warning about both the dangers of nature and of meddling in nature.

Helpers

Animals generally come out of fairytales quite well, and only rarely fill the role of villain. In *The Golden Bird*, a prince is rescued from the machinations of his evil older brothers when he follows the advice of a fox. The fox, in offering aid, is playing one of the most important roles in a fairytale: the helper.



Villains in fairytales often have something the hero wants, like power or wealth, or a house made of gingerbread for the starving Hansel and Gretel

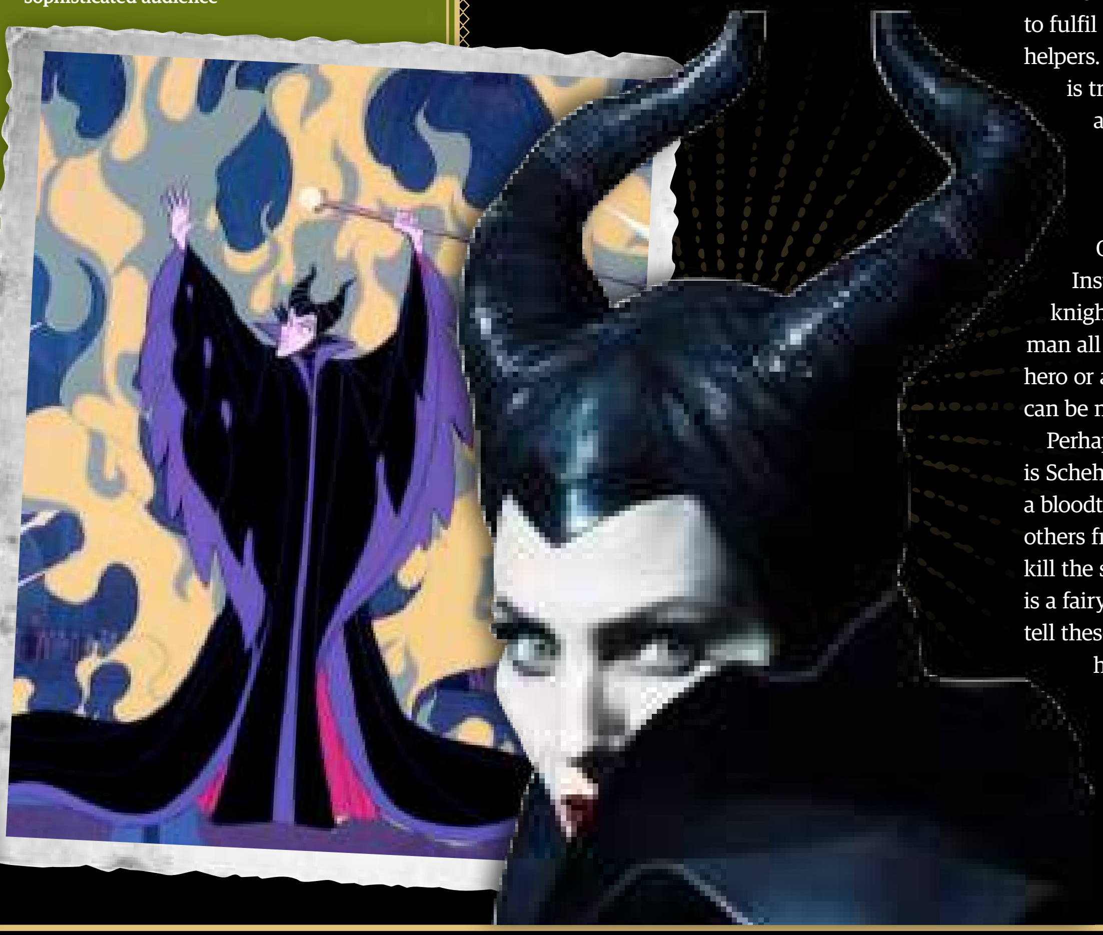


Snow White's villain is both the queen and Snow White's stepmother

Maleficent re-made

In the 1959 Disney film *Sleeping Beauty*, the evil fairy Maleficent bursts into the throne room in a gout of green flames to curse the baby princess, Aurora. Before her 16th birthday, the princess will prick her finger on a spindle and die. Maleficent cackles and leaves. Through further evil machinations, Maleficent brings her curse to fruition, captures the prince who might save Aurora, and transforms into a monstrous dragon. Only being stabbed with the sword of truth ends her wicked reign.

That story could have been told in any fairytale over the centuries, but modern viewers of film expect more complex stories and characters. In the 2014 live-action film *Maleficent*, the main character begins as a protective spirit of a magical valley, only turning to evil when betrayed by the man who will become Aurora's father. In this version, the curse placed on the child is not lethal, and Maleficent, as she grows to know Aurora, does all in her power to undo the spell she set. This is Disney as Greek tragedy. When the princess activates the curse and falls into eternal slumber, it is not a prince's kiss that awakens her but that of eventual protectress Maleficent.

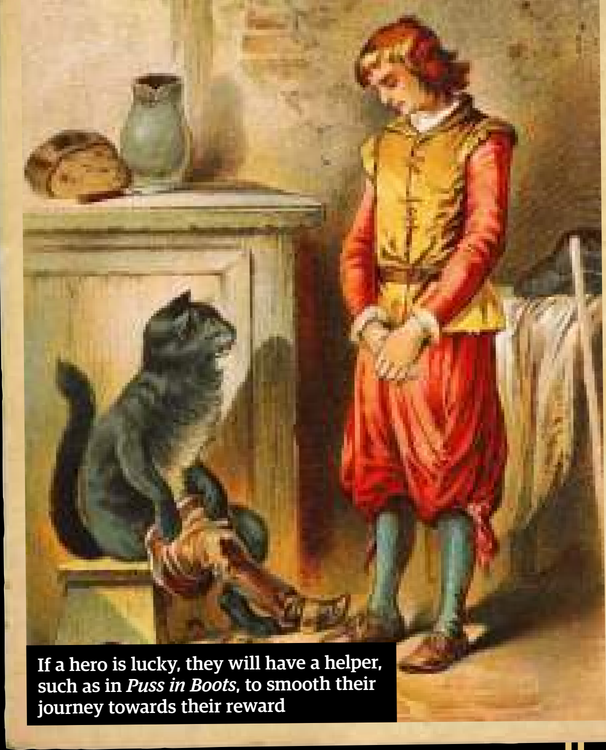


Between 1959 and 2014, Maleficent the evil witch was transformed into a more compassionate character for a more sophisticated audience

Humans are social creatures, and the value of working together is one that many fairytales champion. Among the most common helpers are animals, often given the power of speech. Puss in Boots is a quintessential animal helper, because he gives his master nothing but help and good advice, asking nothing for himself. By using his native feline wit, Puss moves his owner from being a penniless younger son to being son-in-law of the king. In many ways, Puss is the clever hero of his tale, but being an animal he is relegated to the role of helper.

Other types of folkloric creature find themselves most often cast as the helper too. Wish-granting genies seem the ideal helper at first, able to accomplish their owner's every whim. Instead, fairytales dealing with genies and others able to grant wishes often teach caution about getting what you want.

Fairy godmothers are the classic helper one thinks of from fairytales. In *Sleeping Beauty*, it is the fairies who both cause and help solve the main action of the story. When a wicked fairy feels that she has been treated shabbily, she curses the child to die when pricked by a spindle. Only the intervention of the fairy godmother saves the princess from death, by converting the curse to one of a sleep to be broken by a kiss. Later, when she is struck down, the fairy godmother places the whole castle into a sleep as well, so that Sleeping Beauty will not be alone when she is woken.



If a hero is lucky, they will have a helper, such as in *Puss in Boots*, to smooth their journey towards their reward

We have seen that stepmothers have been used as villains many times, and it should therefore not be surprising that mothers' ghosts often appear as helpers. Though dead, they continue to watch over their children and provide them with assistance. In *Ashputtel*, a dying mother tells her daughter to: "Be good and I shall look down on you from heaven." When a stepmother and nasty stepsisters move in, they make Ashputtel wear rags and force her to serve them, but she remains faithful to her mother's wishes. A little bird comes and talks to Ashputtel at her mother's grave and, when a ball is held at the royal court, the bird calls other birds to help Ashputtel with her cleaning to free her to attend it.

All characters in fairytales are fluid and able to fulfil many roles, and it is just the same with helpers. In *The Black Bull of Norroway*, a young girl is trapped in a valley, and the only creature able to help her escape is a great, black bull. The black bull goes to fight a demon to allow them to leave. The bull defeats the demon but cannot find the girl again. Only after many trials are the two reunited. Instead of a bull, though, the girl finds a knight, for the bull had been a transfigured man all along. So is the bull an animal helper, a hero or a prize? In the land of fairytales, a person can be many things all at the same time.

Perhaps the most powerful hero in folk literature is Scheherazade of *1001 Nights*. By telling tales to a bloodthirsty king, she is able to save herself and others from being beheaded, as the king cannot kill the source of the stories he so enjoys. This is a fairytale about the power of fairytales. We tell these stories for as many reasons as humans have ever told any stories. They comfort us, teach us, scare us and remind us. Despite the stories you might read in the papers, fairytales will only die out when people forget how to tell tales.

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It was the Brothers Grimm who popularised fairytales such as *The Frog Prince*

Origins of well-loved tales

The fairytales that most of us are familiar with were usually introduced to us in childhood via one of the famous collections of the world's most popular stories

Written by Rebecca Lewry-Gray

No discussion of stories would be complete without a passing reference to Madame d'Aulnoy's *Les Contes de Fées* ('*Fairytales*') from 1697. These 25 tales were written in a conversational style, and were intended for adults, yet she originated the term 'fairytales' that is now used for the whole genre.

The lives and works of two German academic brothers are now inseparable from fairytale and folklore. The Brothers Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm, popularised *Cinderella*, *The Frog Prince*, *Rapunzel* and *Snow White*, among so many others in *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* ('*Children's and Household Tales*') in 1812-15. The first edition was criticised for being unappealing to children, and in response they began to write more specifically for a children's audience from 1819 onwards. Morals were added and sexual references were taken out. An introduction was also added with advice for parents on age-appropriate stories.

There was a prevalent myth at the time that fairytales were an exact reflection of folklore, especially in the case of French author Charles Perrault, giving them more value due to their perceived 'authenticity'. The brothers had a reputation for collecting tales from peasants, although many sources actually came from the middle class or even higher. They also worked on shaping fairytales into something uniquely German at a time (c. 1794-1815) when most of northern Europe was controlled by Republican or Napoleonic France. They did this by returning regional dialects from High German back to the original forms. The Brothers Grimm appropriated tales as being 'uniquely German', like *Little Red Riding Hood*, even if the tales had existed in many versions throughout the world.

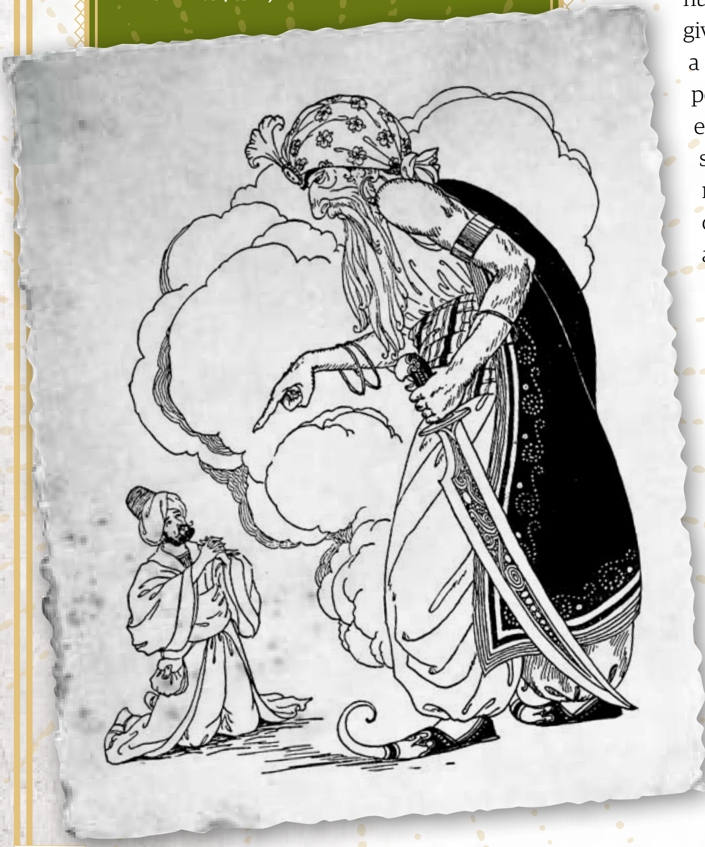
There was also a rise in romantic nationalism, and the belief was that tradition, folklore and the 'common people' were necessary to create and strengthen national identity. Therefore folk stories were deemed 'pure' national literature. Despite the Brothers Grimm collecting and publishing fairytales that they defined as traditionally German, works such as *Sleeping Beauty*/*Little Briar Rose* were retained despite their French origin. Only the influence of the story of sleeping Brünhild in the *Völsunga Saga* saved *Sleeping Beauty* from potential obscurity. Germanic roots of fairytales were also strengthened linguistically in the Grimms' editions. French-derived motifs and character tropes were altered to more Germanic nouns: fairy/fee became enchantress/zauberin. The Brothers Grimm praised Giambattista Basile's work the *Pentamerone* (1634-6) for capturing Neapolitan voices and fitting the romantic view of fairytales as national identity. In reviving the popularity of folklore, the Brothers Grimm's work was also later used to foster nationalism by the Third Reich. Unfortunately, this has coloured some analysis of their work, but their importance to folklore studies still cannot be understated.

> "Morals were added and sexual references were taken out"

A question of authenticity

The many editions, source manuscripts and versions of *1001 Nights* can sometimes seem mind-boggling. Muhsin Mahdi published an Arabic edition (*The Thousand and One Nights*, 1984) based on the oldest surviving manuscript; this was then translated into English by Husain Haddawy (*The Arabian Nights, Based on the Text Edited by Muhsin Mahdi*, 1990). This manuscript is often referred to as the Syrian recension (a revised edition), and dates from either the 14th or 15th century, and was itself used by Antoine Galland for the basis of the first European translation of the tales in 1704-17. Throughout Mahdi's academic career, he looked to apply the methods of critical study of Western manuscripts to Arabic philology and philosophy.

It has been argued that as Mahdi worked from the earliest known manuscript, this edition is the most comprehensive and closest to a 'true' *1001 Nights* with an 'authentic' flavour. This work only contains the core stories, and does not contain the 'orphan' stories of *Aladdin* or *Ali Baba*; this makes the collection shorter. It has been suggested that previous authors and editors have added these stories due to the Western demand for a 'complete version'.



There has been much debate over the truest, most complete edition of *1001 Nights*; Mahdi's 1984 work is highly regarded (Illustration by Milo Winter, 1914)

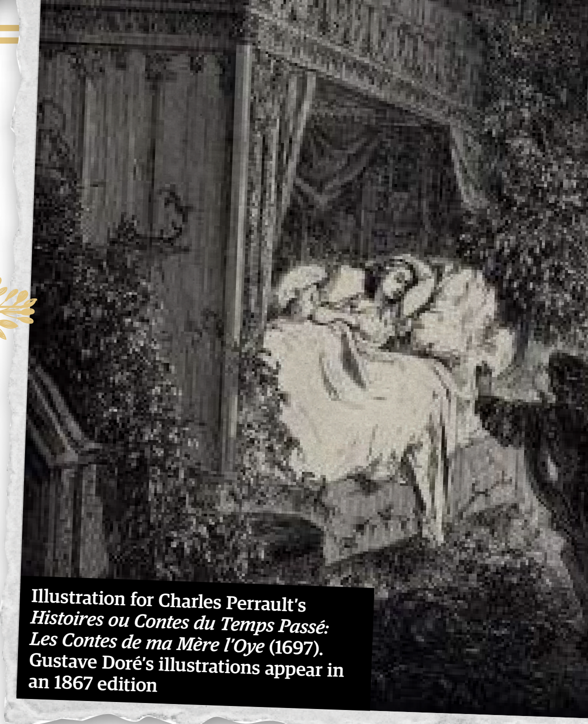
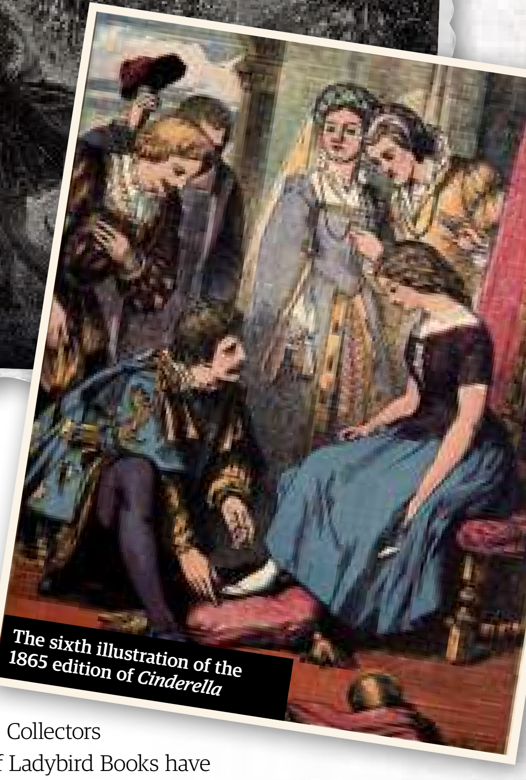


Illustration for Charles Perrault's *Histoires ou Contes du Temps Passé: Les Contes de ma Mère l'Oye* (1697). Gustave Doré's illustrations appear in an 1867 edition

For readers of a certain age, Ladybird's *Well Loved Tales*, produced between 1964-90s, evoke a certain kind of nostalgia. 27 original titles were retold in *Well Loved Tales* between 1964-74 by Vera Southgate, starting with *Cinderella* in 1964, and ending with *The Musicians of Bremen* in 1974.

Fairytales were integral to Ladybird's oeuvre; the second series published by Ladybird Books was traditional fairytales retold by Muriel Levy in the 1940s. Yet the series of *Well Loved Tales* hit a particular chord with the British public, and internationally. The books were economical, without costly dust jackets, yet they had colourful covers and were full of engaging coloured illustrations inside. In some spreads, the need for text is minimal, especially for those just starting out with reading; the illustrations are full of humour and detail. The illustrations give us the impression of a safe world; one that perhaps doesn't exist in a fairytale setting. The rococo detailing of *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast*, and humorous cartoon-style of *Three Little Pigs* were consistent and familiar across the whole series. Douglas Keen, creative and company director, ensured that one or two illustrators were used per series.

There have been numerous reprints and stylistic changes in illustration and the text. Many vintage versions of the illustrations of the 1960s and '70s were replaced with more simplistic artwork in the 1980s and '90s.



The sixth illustration of the 1865 edition of *Cinderella*

The original versions of many fairytales aren't suitable for children. *1001 Nights* is particularly adult in nature

Collectors of Ladybird Books have found edits made for different markets; in the story of *The Little Red Hen*, an illustration of a pig has been replaced by a sheep for the Arabic market. Unfortunately, no change was made in the translation! There have been criticisms levelled at the series, of the edits required in retelling long stories in an abridged fashion, or in retelling stories that have a strong author connection, as with many Hans Christian Andersen works. The Ladybird fairytale books have now moved towards a Disney-focused retelling. In the case of *Snow White*, the Ladybird edition from 1969 follows the Grimm version, with the queen attempting to murder Snow White twice before the poison-apple incident. Modern reissues of the Ladybird *Well Loved Tales* now omit these attempts in line with the animated version from 1937. The prefaces also make reference to animated film versions of the books; the 2012 *Rapunzel* edition references both Disney's *Tangled* (2010) and *Shrek* (2001). It now seems that corporations are received as authors.

Histoires ou Contes du Temps Passé - Les Contes de ma Mere l'Oye ('*Tales and Stories of the Past with Morals - Tales of Mother Goose*') was published in

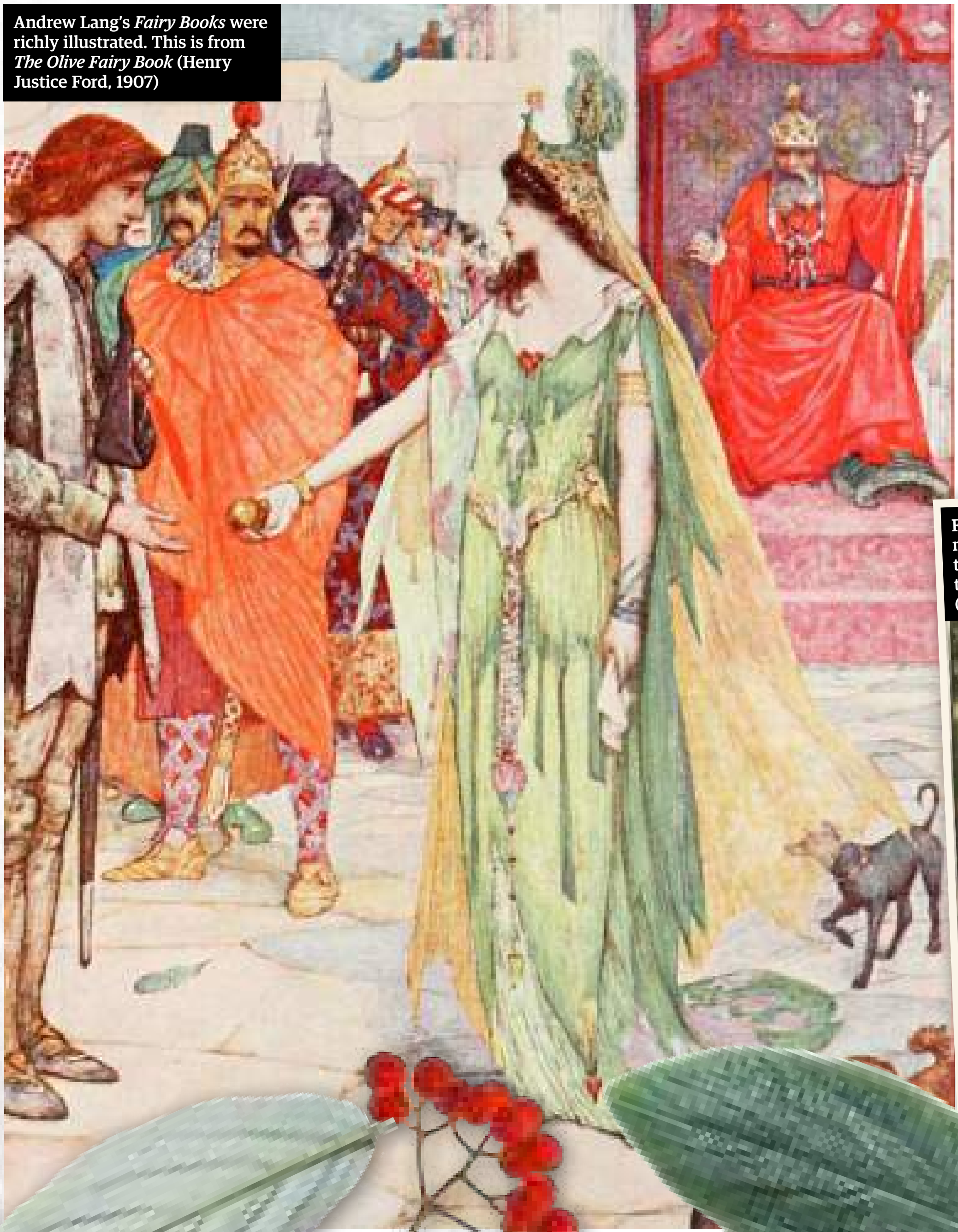
1687 by Charles Perrault, whom many consider the father of modern fairytales as we know them. The reference to Mother Goose was not a person, but refers to popular rural storytelling traditions in a proverb of the time. There appears to be an idea of a Mother Goose tradition in England. However, the earliest surviving edition of a *Mother Goose* title does not predate Perrault, appearing in 1784, despite talk of a lost edition in the 1760s.

The purpose of Perrault's tales is much discussed. Academics and folklorists do not fully know whether Perrault wrote for contemporary literary salons (which was fashionable), or for aristocratic children too. King Louis XIV's morganatic second wife, Madame de Maintenon, wrote for girls in convents, so this would have not been unheard of. The 1697 work is full of stories that modern audiences would recognise: *Sleeping Beauty*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Bluebeard*, *Puss in Boots* and *Cinderella*. Many of Perrault's fairytales had folkloric origins, yet he added rich detail and creative description for his adult audience.

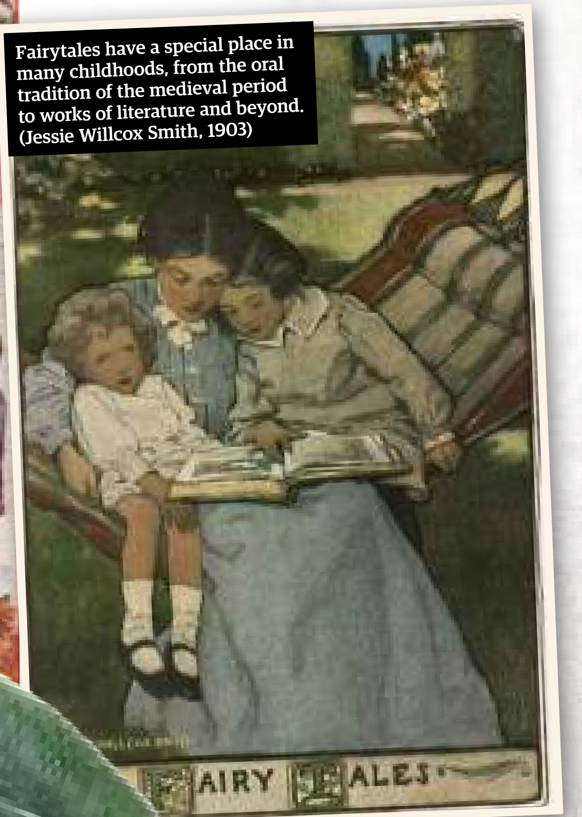
Little Red Riding Hood appears to be a new tale. Despite similar motifs appearing around the world from the 10th century onwards, there is no evidence of the published story under this particular name any earlier. Perrault's first edition gives notes to the reader; lines are to be read loud to scare children as part of the game. Perrault's *Little Red Riding Hood* ends with her climbing into bed with the wolf, by way of a cautionary tale for girls not to trust strange 'wolves'. In both the Brothers Grimm and other traditional German versions, a woodcutter saves both Little Red Riding Hood and her grandmother.

Perrault introduces many of the motifs we would recognise as standard: classic *Cinderella* elements, such as a pumpkin coach, glass slippers and a fairy godmother, are all inventions by Perrault. Past fairytale academics have questioned the use of glass in the slippers, and proposed that it was a mistranslation of fur ('verre' is French for glass; 'vair' is a type of squirrel fur). Many scholars now view it as poetry on the part of Perrault; why have logical footwear choices in a fairytale?

Perrault's *Sleeping Beauty* is presented in two parts. Part one is the story recognisable to most. The princess is cursed by an evil fairy to die when she pricks her finger on a spinning wheel, and the curse is altered by another fairy. The princess instead falls asleep for 100 years, and is then woken by the kiss of a prince. Perrault writes a variant sequel, with Sleeping Beauty's two children being requested as a meal by her (part-troll) mother-in-law. A clever cook substitutes meat for the children, and the queen is eaten by snakes instead. Despite Giambattista Basile treating these two parts as one story in *Sun, Moon, and Talia*, this second part was lost in subsequent retellings along the way. The Brothers Grimm treat this second part as a fragmentary story. Perrault's work can be viewed as educational allegories encouraging obedience in wives. The sins of women are paid for in penance in the case of Sleeping Beauty's curse.



Andrew Lang's *Fairy Books* were richly illustrated. This is from *The Olive Fairy Book* (Henry Justice Ford, 1907)



Fairytales have a special place in many childhoods, from the oral tradition of the medieval period to works of literature and beyond. (Jessie Willcox Smith, 1903)

Antoine Galland was the first European translator of *1001 Nights*, after successfully translating a manuscript of the tale of *Sinbad the Sailor*. He then embarked on a translation of the Syrian manuscript of *1001 Nights*. Galland took great liberties in translating the tales; all of the poetry and many of the erotic scenes were cut in order to conform to European trends, and as this was the first Western translation, many reprints and retellings found in collections for children use Galland as their template. The stories of *Aladdin* and *Ali Baba* were not part of the original work, and although they are now often inseparable from *1001 Nights*, many scholars view these two stories as a creation of Galland.

There were many collections of folklore and fairytale in the Victorian era; *Andrew Lang's Fairy Books* (1889-1913) have since become classics. Lang and his wife, Leonora Blanche Alleyne, worked on a number of fairytale books, including 12 coloured fairy books, with thematic collections. The themes ran from 'Romance' to 'Princes and Princesses' and 'Saints and Heroes'. Lang wrote the prefaces and edited until the 1890s; Alleyne was credited with much of the translating and became editor of the books after Lang. While the stories were not collected from oral sources, many tales had their first appearance in Lang's books.

Lang was a poet and novelist, and had a reputation as a folklorist influenced by Anglo-Scottish border traditions. Some stories had attribution, others a geographical area of origin, and Lang took care in the prefaces to explain that these stories were not his. Lang also tried to educate in these prefaces, and explained the honest need for bowdlerisation as these story collections were intended for children. JRR Tolkien criticised the collections for these edits, as well as for collecting stories with no magical elements. The books, however, were hugely popular, helped in part by their uniform covers and 'collectable' nature, especially with the neat device of colour.

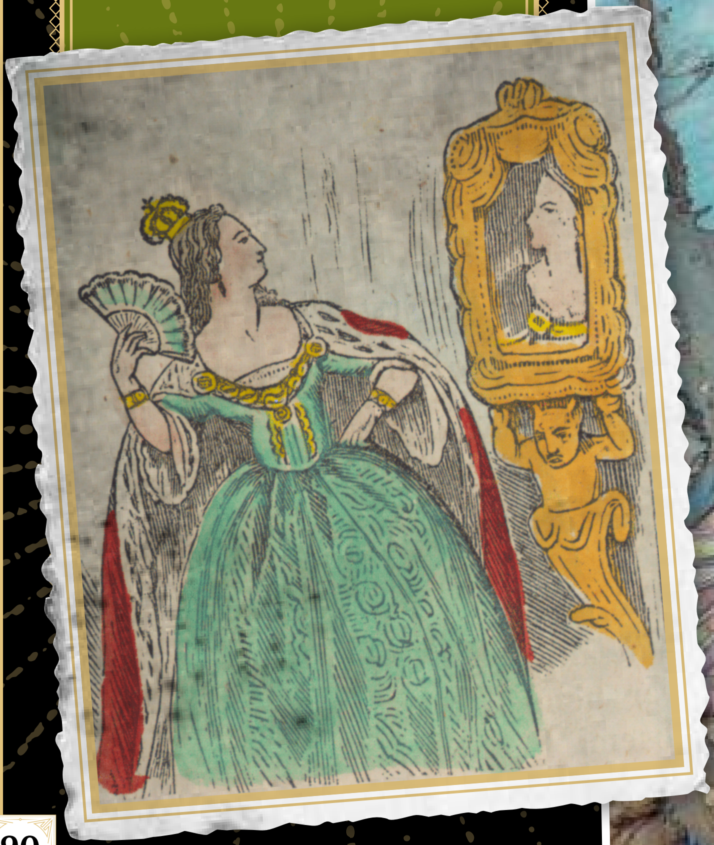
1889's first book (*Blue*) contains some of the most famous fairytales: *Beauty and the Beast*, *Goldilocks* and *Jack the Giant Killer* among others. *The Red Fairy Book* (1890) expanded the scope with Norse mythology and Danish and Russian tales. Spanish, Chinese, Native American, Ugandan and Indian fairy stories had tales featured in the subsequent books, and by 1910 Lang returned to the British

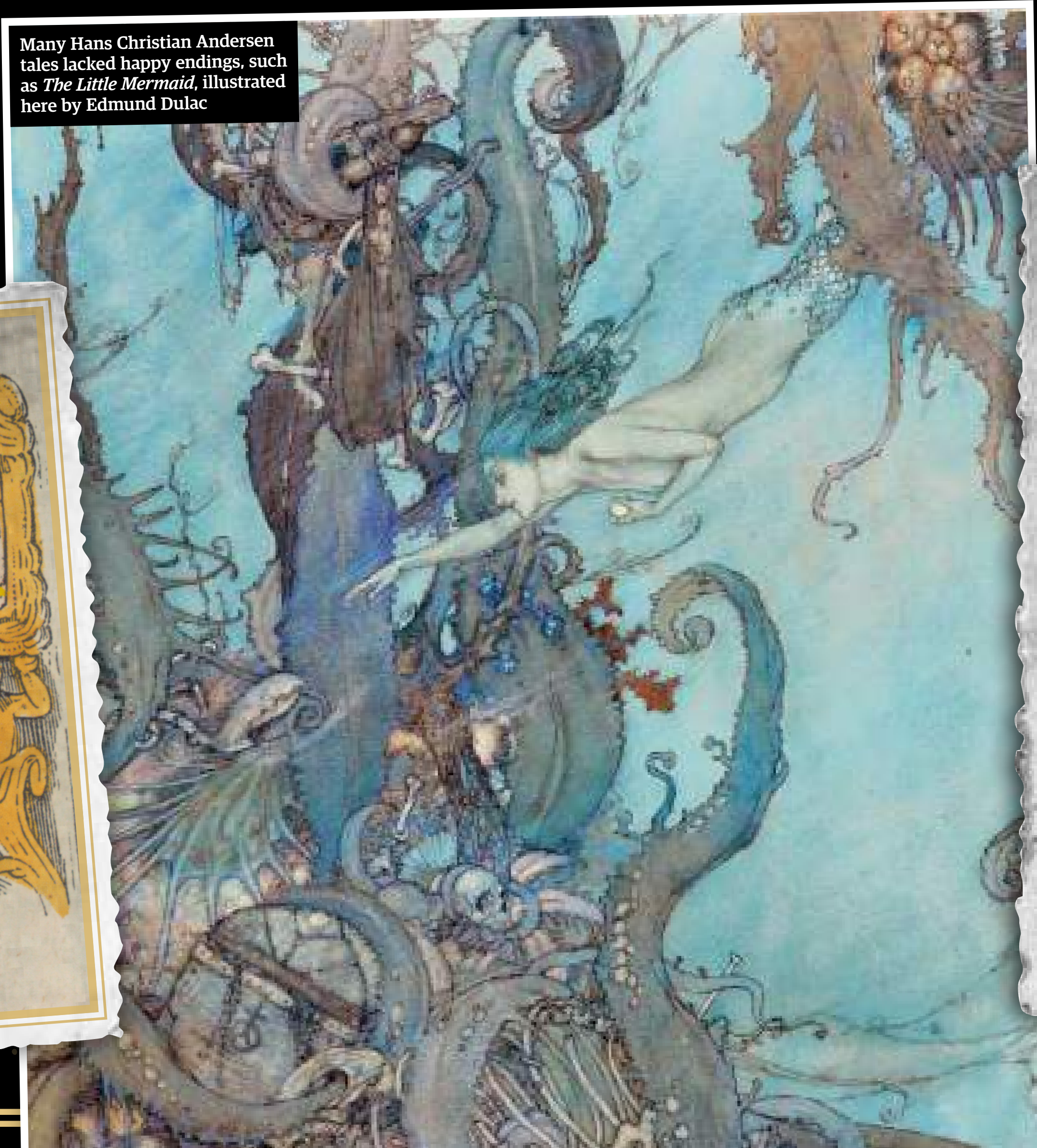
Modern, twisted tales

In 1976, Angela Carter accepted a commission to translate Charles Perrault's fairytales, and after that she started work on her own collection of short fairytales, *The Bloody Chamber* (1979). The ten stories that make up the collection are based on fairytales, but with a macabre feminist bent. Carter was quoted as saying: "My intention was not to do 'versions' or, as the American edition of the book said, horribly, 'adult' fairy tales, but to extract the latent content from the traditional stories and to use it as the beginnings of new stories."

Carter went on to edit *The Virago Book of Fairy Tales* (1991) and *The Second Virago Book of Fairy Tales* (released posthumously in 1992); both these volumes have been published together as *Angela Carter's Book of Fairy Tales*. As with Carter's previous fairytale-adjacent work, the stories are female-centred, and quite bloody – these are definitely not the normal bedtime fairytale! The works are arranged by rough theme, such as 'Moral Tales' and 'Brave, Beautiful and Wilful'. The collection brings together stories from around the world – Egyptian, Inuit and Peruvian tales all feature. Carter acknowledged colonial bias, and where possible works are presented with the original slang and dialect intact.

Carter centred her fairytales on the often-overlooked female protagonist. Her heroines have agency and desires of their own



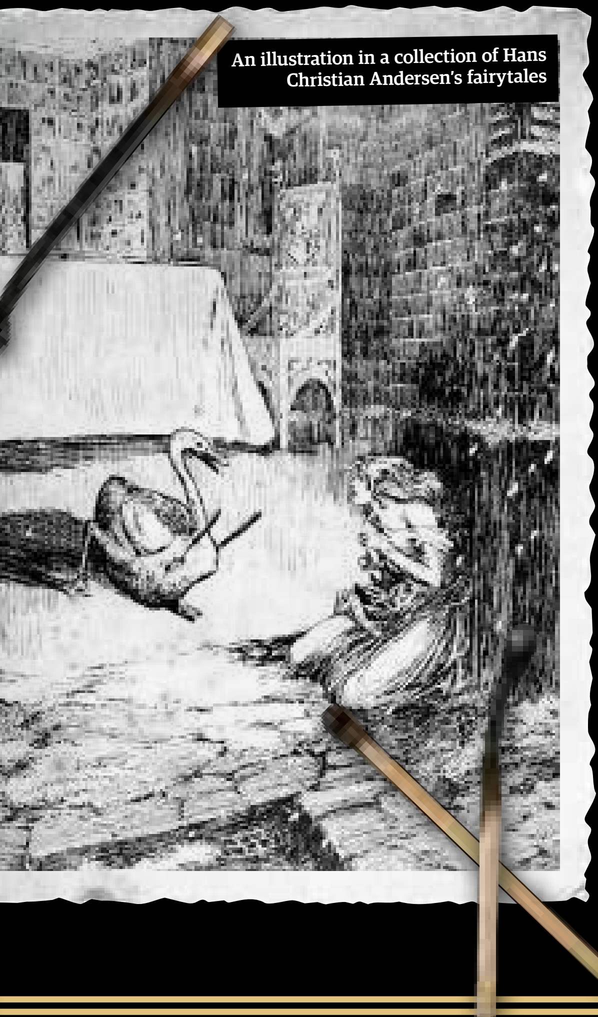


Many Hans Christian Andersen tales lacked happy endings, such as *The Little Mermaid*, illustrated here by Edmund Dulac

Isles with a collection of Scottish, Welsh and English tales.

Hans Christian Andersen was a prolific Danish writer, and now his name is a byword for fairytales. Many academics estimate that only seven of Andersen's 200 tales were borrowed or retold. As a child, he was directly influenced by the tales of *1001 Nights*, read to him by his father. Andersen's stories make up a huge part of the collective consciousness of the West, and life lessons are given through his funny, fantastical and often sad stories. Previous to him, children's fiction had been dull and didactic, intended only to teach, whereas Andersen's authorial voice was conspiratorial and comic. His tales were not set in distant lands long ago, but in contemporary settings, and gave household objects personalities and magic. Sadly, some English language translations were so poor (working from the German translations from the Danish) that Andersen and his works have a reputation of being naive or just for children.

Anderson was not a just an editor or collector; he was an innovative storyteller, altering the genre as it was defined. One of his first fairytales, *The Tinderbox* (1835) doesn't begin with 'Once upon a time…' as was the convention, and his characters use colloquial language. As Andersen had trained to be an actor, his stories were improved by reading aloud, and he was sought after as a dinner guest once he found fame. With a childhood as impoverished as that in many of his stories, Andersen worked hard to give voices to under-represented people: children and the very poor. This was part of the wave of cultural decentralisation at the time. The dispossessed and poor were now acceptable subjects for art.



An illustration in a collection of Hans Christian Andersen's fairytales

It is a trope in Andersen's work that his stories lack happy endings; the Little Mermaid dissolves into seafoam and the Little Match Girl freezes to death. Many of these stories have been sanitised by subsequent retellings. However, there is much argument to suggest that children require stories with unhappy endings in order to help them develop empathy.

> We think of Hans Christian Andersen's work as based on folklore but only seven stories are retellings – the rest are original

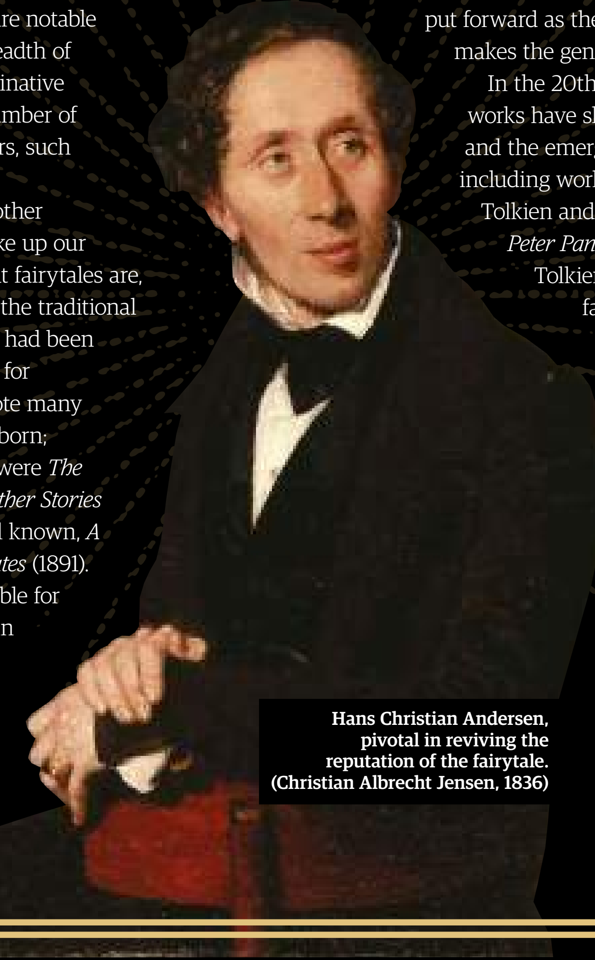
However, there are many collections of fairytales that hold tight to the 'happily ever after' narrative; the 22 mid-to-late 20th-century anthologies of Ruth Manning-Sanders (1886-1988) are examples of this. Manning-Sanders was a Welsh poet and author who collected and retold fairytales. In the collection *Book of Princesses and Princes* (1969), she reassures the reader that "they every one have a happy ending." Manning-Sanders does not just deal in comfortable stories, and she educates the reader with detailed information about the origin of stories in her forewords. These anthologies are notable also due to their breadth of scope and the imaginative illustrations by a number of celebrated illustrators, such as Raymond Briggs.

There are many other collections that make up our cultural idea of what fairytales are, without containing the traditional stories. Oscar Wilde had been writing fairy stories for magazines, and wrote many after his sons were born; notable collections were *The Happy Prince and Other Stories* (1888) and, less well known, *A House of Pomegranates* (1891). The stories are notable for a number of Wildean epigrams: "I like to do all the talking myself. It saves time and prevents arguments," is one example. Wilde's tales examine vices and virtues through selfish giants, self-important rockets (based on the painter James Abbott McNeill Whistler) and nightingales.

These are not exactly moral tales; some protagonists do not repent or change at all. Wilde informs his readers that telling stories with a moral end is actually "a very dangerous thing to do," (as the duck says to the linnet in *The Devoted Friend*). Wilde once said that this collection was "intended neither for the British child nor the British public."

There are also a number of story collections that, while not strictly fairytales, are presented as such or have been perceived by the public as such. Rudyard Kipling dealt with English folklore in his works *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906) and *Rewards and Fairies* (1910). *The Jungle Book* (1894) was then written in the recognisable style of an Indian folk tale. It can be argued that *The Jungle Book* is not a fairytale - there's no magic - but animals talk, morals are present and the hero's journey follows a loose monomythic structure. The reputation of *The Jungle Book* has altered over time, and has been included in many modern fairytale collections. There has been a lot of theory regarding what 'makes' a fairytale, with magic, transformation and the existence of 'the fantastic' all being put forward as the 'defining' element that makes the genre.

In the 20th century, a number of works have slid between fairytales and the emerging genre of fantasy, including works by JM Barrie, JRR Tolkien and CS Lewis. Barrie's *Peter Pan* is one such story. Tolkien suggested that fairytales were distinct from travellers' tales, science fiction, beast tales and dream stories. Perhaps these distinct genres have been conflated by the public in the sense that all tales that are for and enjoyed by children are undoubtedly viewed as and referred to as fairytales.



Hans Christian Andersen, pivotal in reviving the reputation of the fairytale. (Christian Albrecht Jensen, 1836)

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Monsters

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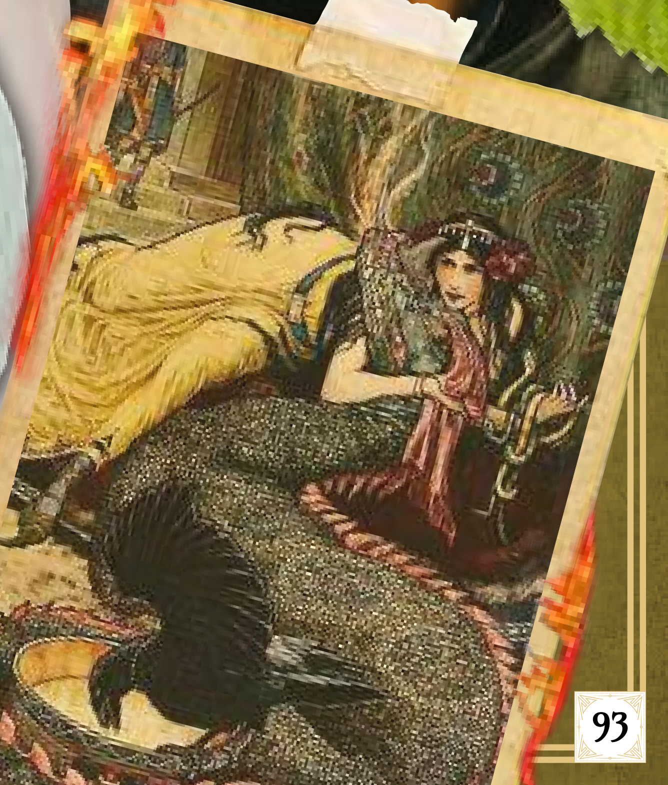


Monsters and mythical beasts

Lurking in the unknown regions of the world and the recesses of our minds, monsters have always fascinated humans

Written by Ben Gazur

In the last Ice Age the most fearsome beast in Europe was the cave lion and the largest creature was the mammoth. To the humans of this period both must have represented powers beyond their control. Yet there, 40,000 years ago, a human took a piece of mammoth tusk and carved a figure that united beast and man. The Lowenmensch ('Lion Man') is a statue with the body and limbs of a human but surmounted by the head of a lion, and is the earliest piece of figurative art yet discovered. At the birth of art humans were already considering the ideas that would later be unleashed in the search for monsters and uncanny animals.

The Lowenmensch figurine is by no means unique in ancient art. Therianthrope (animal-human hybrid) images appear in cave art from around the world. 12,000 years ago in France the image of a human with the ears and horns of a stag was etched and painted into a cave wall, four metres above the ground in an inaccessible place, as if to place such creatures far away. What did these early figures represent? Because they predate writing we will never be sure whether these were gods, spirits, monsters, or some category of being now unknown to us.

What is a monster?

Monsters come in many forms - as many as the human imagination can create. For our purposes though we can say that a monster is a being who in some way transcends what is to be found in nature. A wolf is natural, a man is natural, but a werewolf partaking of both forms is monstrous. A dog having one head is commonplace but give him three and you have Cerberus, the guard dog of Hades.

The word monster probably derives from the Latin words monstrare - to demonstrate - and monare - to warn. For the Romans, the divine often spoke through the natural world. A monstrous birth, of an animal with two heads for example, would be a sign and a warning given to humans by the gods. For our ancestors, monsters and mythical beasts were far more present in their daily lives as they lived closer to the cycle of birth and death.

Ignorance is also a key aspect in the creation of many monsters. If you do not understand nature then anything can seem unnatural. What did the ancient Greeks make of the first giraffe they saw? The name they gave the long-necked and spotted animals was 'camelopardalis', derived from their words for camel and leopard.

Clearly the giraffe was a monstrous crossing of the two. As we shall see, the mixing of different species was one of the most fertile grounds for creating monsters.

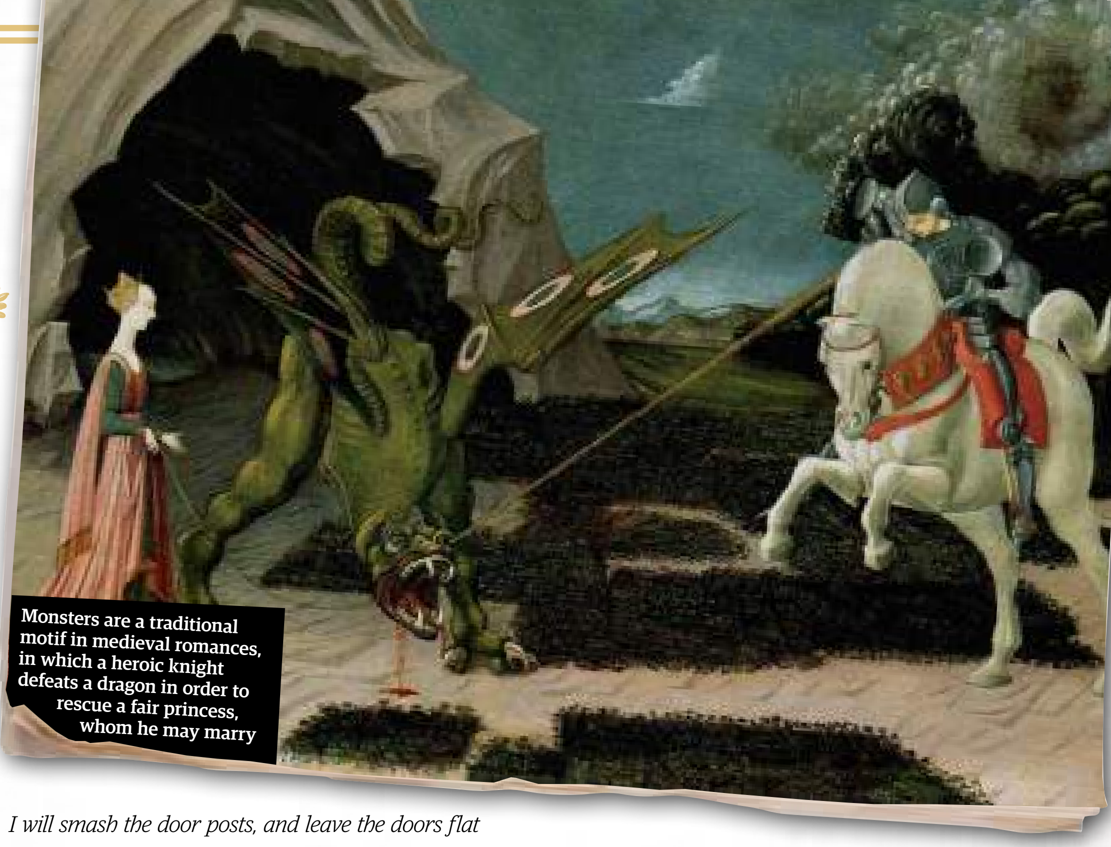
The unnatural history of monsters

There is no way of knowing what the earliest humans thought about monsters, but as soon as writing developed monsters made an immediate appearance. Stories about Gilgamesh, first written down around 2100 BCE but orally composed earlier, were later brought together into the famous *Epic of Gilgamesh* and feature a number of creatures that are recognisably monstrous. In it, the fearsome goddess Ishtar threatens that unless she gets what she wants:

"I will knock down the Gates of the Netherworld,

> "A monster is a being who in some way transcends what is to be found in nature"

From the earliest times humans have seen the world as full of monstrous and miraculous beasts as this ancient Persian Griffin-Lion shows



Monsters are a traditional motif in medieval romances, in which a heroic knight defeats a dragon in order to rescue a fair princess, whom he may marry

I will smash the door posts, and leave the doors flat down, and will let the dead go up to eat the living! And the dead will outnumber the living!"

Thus zombies have a far greater lineage than the recent glut of undead films. What was it that Ishtar wanted? She desired the Bull of Heaven, a huge and vicious beast, to attack Gilgamesh. When the hero defeats the bull his troubles with monsters are not over. He later has to face Humbaba the Terrible, a giant tasked with guarding the valuable cedar forests. Even before these tales were written down we can find traces of them in the sculptures and art of pre-literate peoples. Who knows what monsters are lurking around nameless simply because no one wrote them down?

Evidence points to Gilgamesh being a real king of Uruk but it is unlikely that he ever really did fight monsters or gods. Later generations created foes of sufficient ferocity for a mighty king to fight.

Heroes and monsters

The idea of populating the past with monsters is a trope found in many cultures. The great deeds of the heroes of the past become more magnificent if done in the face of supernatural enemies.

The epics of Homer offer a window on Greek culture before writing. The archaic period of Greece was a chaotic one with a patchwork of kingdoms where, later Greeks believed, the heroic offspring of their gods contended with monsters on a regular basis. Homer's *Odyssey* devotes several books to the various monsters that the wily Odysseus had to overcome. Odysseus, renowned as a man who told lies and told them well, regales us with stories of his own cleverness. Trapped in the cave of a cyclops he blinds the giant and rides out strapped to the underside of a sheep. In a decade of wandering the seas Odysseus loses his entire crew to various monsters and the whims of the gods, yet he himself survives. Even this early in the development of monster tales, we must question what we are hearing. Odysseus is a known weaver of fabulous stories. Should we be cheering his successes or pondering whether monsters exist at all?

While Odysseus makes us question the nature of monsters, Greek myth also gives us more straightforward tales of them. Heracles could not be more different to Odysseus. Where Odysseus wheedled his way out of problems with clever words, Heracles never met a problem that could not be overcome with brute strength and his trusty club. In the course of his 12 famous labours Heracles must capture the preternaturally swift Ceryneian hind of Artemis, slay the vast Nemean lion, steal the human-eating horses of Diomedes, and slay the multi-headed Hydra. In this myth we see all the varieties of monster.

Some, like the Nemean lion, are simply over-mighty versions of real animals. Others, like the horses of Diomedes, transcend the normal nature of the average vegetarian horse. In the Hydra, whose heads regrow more numerous than ever unless cauterised, we see the true mythological monster, one that never has existed.

Later epics would also use monsters to reveal the heroism of their protagonists. In the Anglo-

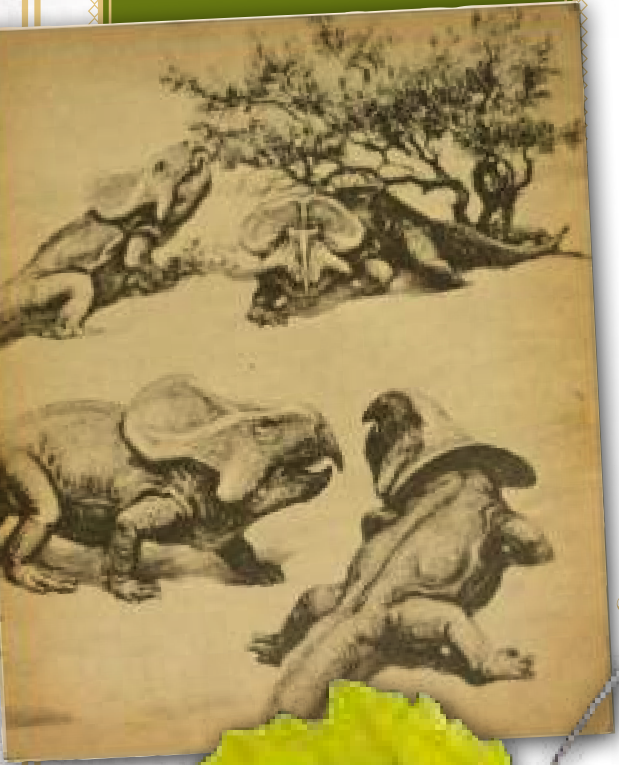
> "Zombies have a far greater lineage than the recent glut of undead films"

Bones of monsters

On the beaches of Whitby, UK, locals often found strange stones. Coiled and black, they looked like nothing so much as petrified snakes. These so-called 'Snake Stones' were explained as snakes driven out by St Hilda when she built an abbey there and punished the serpents by turning them to stone. In fact they are ammonites, fossilised and extinct molluscs, but they show the deep links that can exist between fossils and folklore.

The most impressive fossils, such as those of dinosaurs, created the most impressive monsters. In Mongolia, the ancients believed, lived griffins – a creature with the body and limbs of a lion but the beaked head of an eagle. Some believe this creature came into being when local people discovered the remains of protoceratops, a lion-sized dinosaur with a beaked mouth. More recent fossils such as those of elephants may have led to the idea of a cyclops as the nasal cavity of their skulls looks like one large eye socket. Fossilised footprints also found their way into folklore. These trackways, impressed into solid stone, were thought to be left by magical creatures. In China they were sometimes considered to be the tracks left by dragons. Others thought the three-toed footprints of therapods belonged to huge and heavenly chickens.

Fossils may have inspired many legends of mythical beasts. The beaked dinosaur protoceratops may be the basis of the griffin



Saxon poem, the eponymous Beowulf must again and again face dreadful beings. He describes how he swam for five days and nights in the ocean carrying a sword and defeating nine sea monsters. In the course of the poem, Beowulf will fight with the wild Grendel, Grendel's mother, and a dragon. While Beowulf defeats the dragon he is mortally injured. Heroes cannot always escape unscathed from their battles. Yet it is Grendel, a wild man, who is best remembered as Beowulf's enemy. He cannot stand the sound of singing from a mead hall and so attacks it at night and slaughters those he finds inside. Grendel is perhaps most memorable as he is most like a human. The author of *Beowulf* gives Grendel an excuse for his beastly behaviour - he is a descendent of the first murderer, Cain.

Monsters can be used symbolically to provide a non-human, 'other' enemy that the protagonist of a story has to confront

Symbolic beasts

Grendel is just one example of a monster being used symbolically in folklore. Clearly he is meant to stand for all those who live outside the community, as he does not join in either their worship or their celebrations. When it comes to other monsters though, their symbolic value is defined not just by their nature but by the cultural atmosphere in which they are discussed.

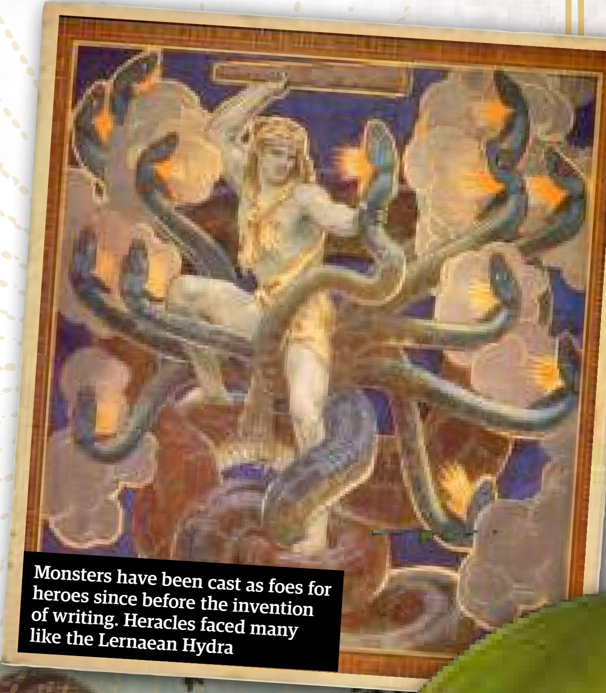
In the Christian Middle Ages of Europe, one of the most popular genres of book was the bestiary. Often lavishly illustrated, these tomes would reveal the strange wonders of nature to their readers. While some creatures we designed for entertainment (such as the bonnacon, which defended itself by projectile defecating) other entries were designed to teach culturally appropriate lessons. The phoenix was long known in many cultures but in European bestiaries its fiery death and rebirth was paralleled to Jesus's resurrection. The bestiaries also freely mixed legendary with real animals. Pelicans are real but they do not, as bestiaries suggested, feed their young with their own blood, no matter how well it stands in for the Eucharist.

Unicorns were another favourite beast in many cultures. Known from the ancient world and the Bible, the unicorn found a key role in medieval mythology. Representing the incarnation of Jesus they could only be trapped by a female virgin, who in turn represented the Virgin Mary. Other cultures found the unicorn less mystical and their authors simply describe the unicorn as a horned horse. Marco Polo thought he had encountered one, which he described as being huge and grey, with a black horn and a penchant for rolling in mud and ooze. Despite looking nothing like the courtly unicorns of Europe, Polo was only able to interpret the reality of a rhino by linking it to the unicorn he expected.

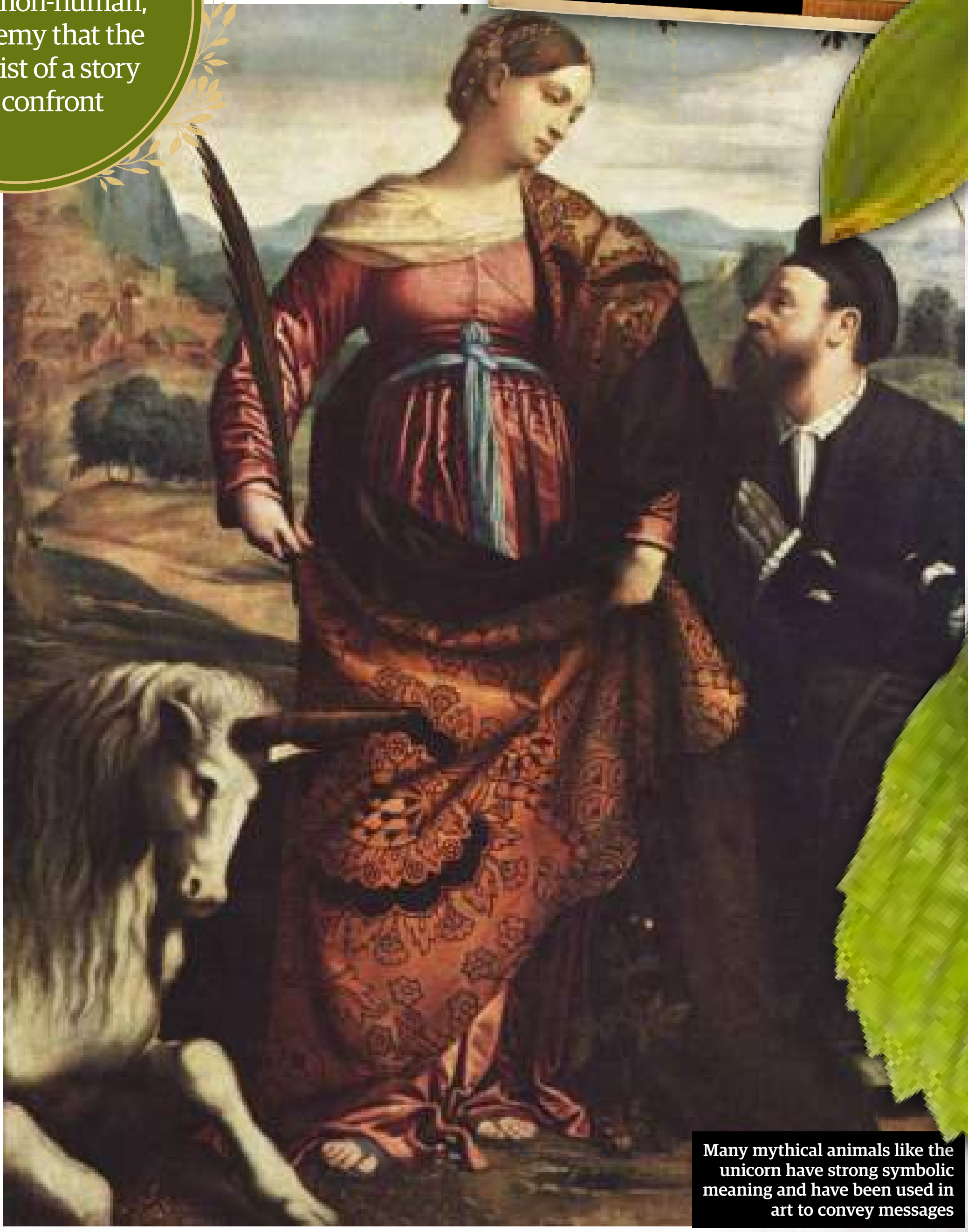
Perhaps the most widespread legendary animal is the dragon. Beasts that can be called dragons are found in ancient Mesopotamia, the Bible, and ancient Chinese tales, among many others.

Proto-Indo-European legends of a serpent slain by a hero have found their ways into many mythologies. Over time the meaning of the dragon has evolved along with the physical attributes dragons are supposed to have.

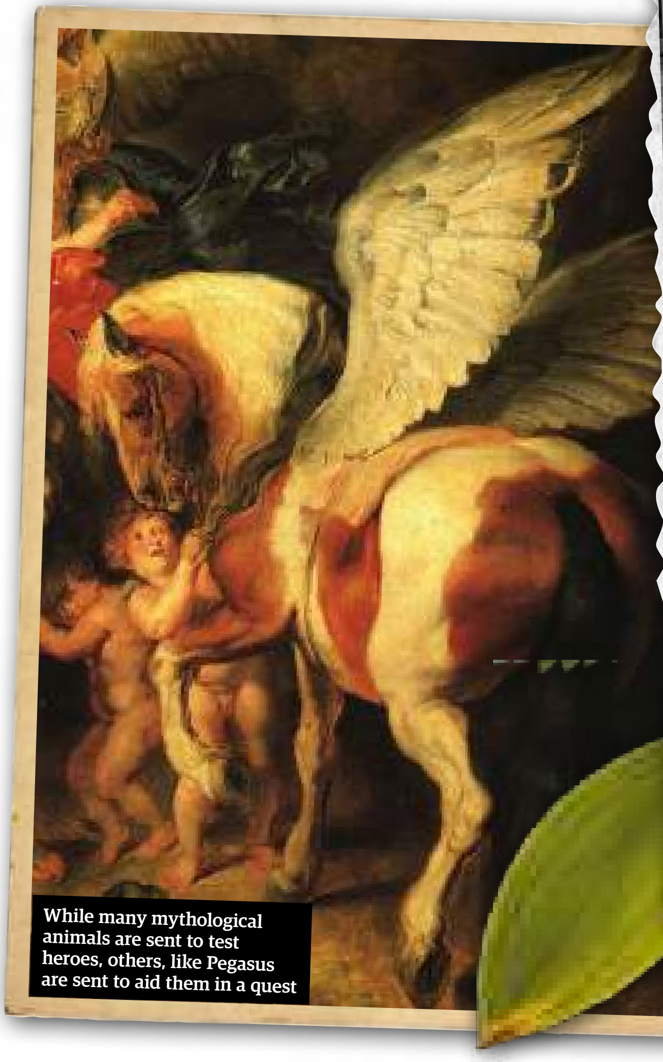
In the East dragons are often shown with a snake-like body but

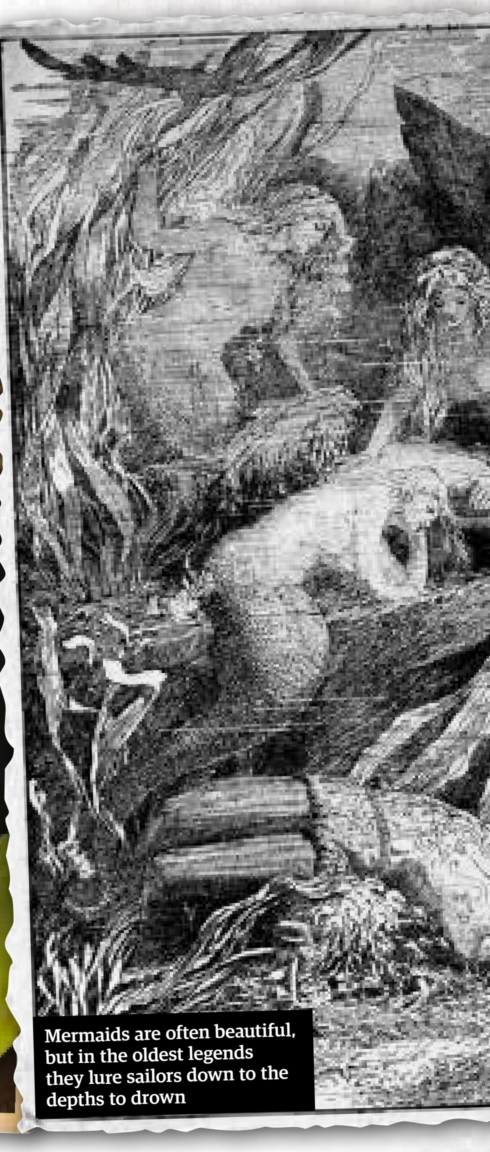


Monsters have been cast as foes for heroes since before the invention of writing. Heracles faced many like the Lernaean Hydra



Many mythical animals like the unicorn have strong symbolic meaning and have been used in art to convey messages


While many mythological animals are sent to test heroes, others, like Pegasus are sent to aid them in a quest


Mermaids are often beautiful, but in the oldest legends they lure sailors down to the depths to drown

with four clawed limbs. They represent wisdom and excellence, with the Emperors of China appropriating them as a symbol of their power. These dragons are strongly associated with water and the vagaries of weather.

In the West the ancient serpents became winged reptiles, some able to breathe flames, which were used as the test of heroism for knights. These dragons had a habit of hoarding gold and jewels and kidnapping maidens.

While the Eastern dragons might impart wisdom, the Western dragon was simply a step in the hero's path to glory. Many holy men, such as St George, showed their saintly status by slaughtering a dragon. St Margaret was one of the few women to free themselves from the grasp of a dragon. Of course, in her case, it was not simply a dragon that she slew, but the Devil himself.

Beasts below us

Images of St Margaret often show her emerging from the belly of a dragon having prayed her way out. The idea of monsters as aspects of the diabolical are as widespread as the idea of monsters. The Devil is hardly ever shown as the epitome of beauty he possessed before the fall but is instead depicted as a monstrous figure. The archangel Michael tramples him in the form of a dragon. Other Christian images of the Devil give him animal features such as bull's horns, a goat's legs, or porcine features. The mixing of species God had created was just one of the Devil's perversions.

Monsters can represent the unknown because we so rarely see them for ourselves. It is no wonder then that the afterlife, of which we can have no direct knowledge, is often associated with dreadful creatures. The deities that rule over the dead in polytheistic religions are often monsters.

Hel in Norse myth is physically half a living woman and half a rotting corpse. Apep in Egyptian belief is part hippo, part crocodile, and part lion, and waits to devour the souls of those found unworthy of eternal life.

The placing of the Devil in Hell along with his deformed demons demonstrates how monsters toyed with God's creation. By mixing aspects of his perfect animals, demons and hellish beasts were thought of as insults to the deity. While non-existent monsters may be able to deal with the abuse heaped on them, this belief in the devilish nature of the deformed could have disastrous consequences for humans. Anyone with a birthmark or a disability could be viewed as ungodly.

Monsters in nature

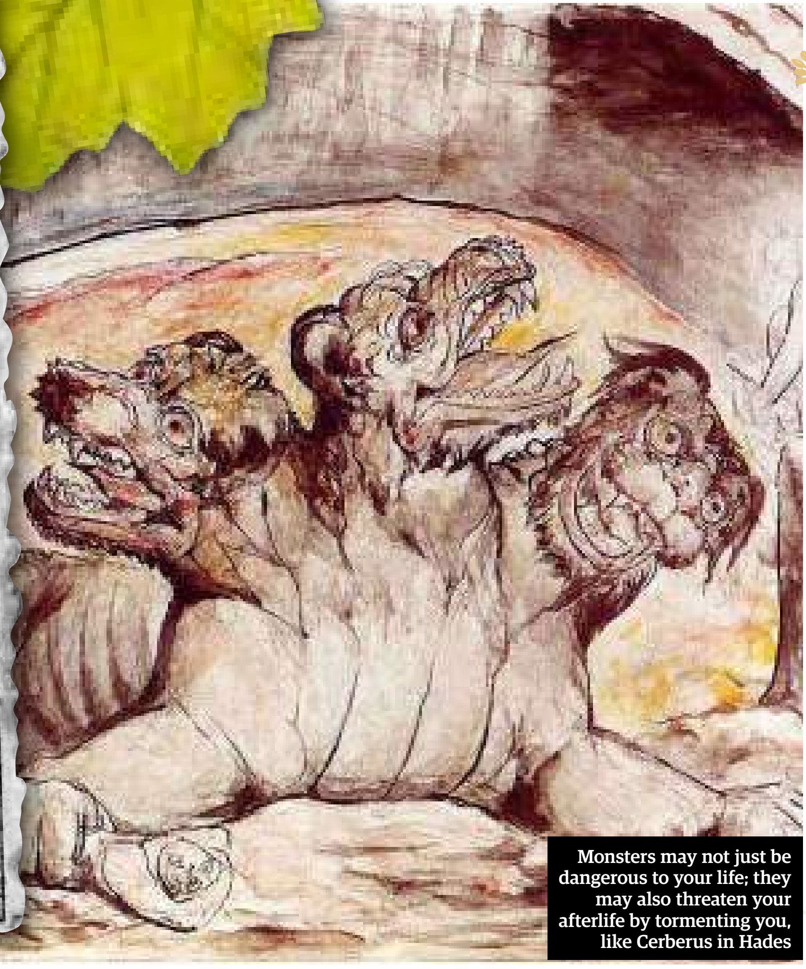
Monsters in myth and legend often have a meaning related to the narrative. There are other types of monster though, which were either thought to be real or that had evolved from nature itself. Where humans are relatively powerless they imagine other powers to be in control. Nowhere is this better exemplified than in the legends of monsters inhabiting water and the sea. A sailor must face the truth that the abyss they glide over is infinitely more powerful than them. For those on the shore who never saw their loved ones return, they had to explain how it was that skilled mariners could be lost at sea.

Odysseus, whose travels we noted earlier, faced many such marine monsters. At one point he had to steer his ship between the monsters Scylla and Charybdis. These two lived on rocks separated by a narrow strait. To steer away from one put your ship within reach of the other. Scylla is described as a woman with a pack of dogs instead of legs, ravenous for human flesh. Charybdis, on the other hand, is not described and is far more terrifying for our ignorance of it. Odysseus is advised to sail closer to Scylla, for while she may snatch six men from the deck, Charybdis will smash the entire ship. In later mythology Charybdis came to represent a whirlpool that would suck down the unwary. Jason and the Argonauts had to face two cliffs that would crash together and crush a ship. Rocks and shoals have always been sailors' worst foes.

Mermaids, those beings mixed together from humans and fish, fulfilled a number of roles in sea folklore. In British folklore they are often omens of ill-luck and they lure men to their deaths, as they often do in African myths.

The Hindu tale of Suvannamaccha, the golden mermaid, and Hanuman, shows mermaids as at first unhelpful beings, but love soon blossoms between the two and mermaids come to Hanuman's aid. Besides mermaids we find sea serpents, krakens, kelpies, and numerous other fantastic beasts populating the depths and explaining the untold numbers of sailors who disappeared at sea.

Monsters are often used to symbolise the nature of evil, often represented as ugly, devouring, and unnatural



Monsters may not just be dangerous to your life; they may also threaten your afterlife by tormenting you, like Cerberus in Hades

While monsters can sometimes be seen as representing some specific aspect of nature, in the absence of a rational explanation, others were simply thought to be a part of creation never seen before. To the ancient mind the world was inhabited with a near-infinite variety of beasts. Herodotus has been called both the Father of History and the Father of Lies. His research led him to look into all aspects of the world he sought to describe, and he did not hesitate to include monsters. According to him the lands beyond those known to the Greeks were swarming with unusual creatures. In the deserts of the east he said you would find huge and hairy ants that in digging up their nests would reveal deposits of gold. Some believe he was passing on a garbled description of marmots, who indeed do sometimes dig up gold when they burrow. This is an example of how monsters can be born from half-heard information from far away. Other legendary beasts in Herodotus clearly come from the tendency of humans to fill in the unknown areas of maps with "Here be dragons". In the wilderness beyond Libya he places dog-headed men, and humans with eyes in their chest. Even when Herodotus heard of things he could not believe in (such as goat-legged men, and tribes of werewolves) he always included them, as he knew his audience would love to hear about them. The human appetite for the monstrous is apparently an eternal part of our nature.

Why humans make monsters

Monsters and fantastic beasts will always be with us. No fantasy book or film can escape their symbolism. Humans will always look at nature and wonder what else could have been created. Monsters reflect the human need to shape the world in our image and that is why monsters have always existed as a motif in myth and fairy tale. The Big Bad Wolf tells our children that the world is a scary place and that they must not stray. Monsters are always beings that transgress in some way and bend the natural order of things and so work to show people what is normal and acceptable. That may be an overly pessimistic view of monsters and other beasts however. It may be that legendary creatures are meant to spur us to always see what is on the other side of the hill and discover new wonders. And perhaps the most important lesson taught to us by tales of monsters is not that the world is full of terrible things - we all already know that - but that with bravery and fortitude, a heroic individual can overcome them.

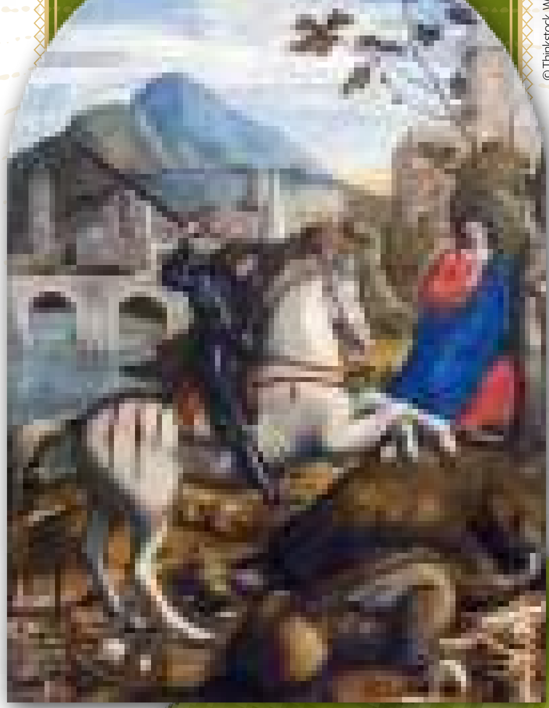
The dragon hunters

Dragons in the West have always been a favoured foe for heroes. When Heracles was tasked with recovering the golden apples of the Hesperides he first had to overcome the hundred-headed dragon Ladon that coiled itself around them.

The idea of dragons gathering great hoards of wealth perhaps made them a tempting target, but their inhumanity made them excellent fodder for folk tales. Since a dragon is not a person they may be slain with impunity.

In Germanic myth, wingless dragons called lindworms could be found in barrows guarding cursed treasure. In the Norse stories of Sigurd the hero must retrieve treasure from a dragon called Fafnir. Instead of charging in and fighting him directly, Sigurd digs a trench and waits for the dragon to slither overhead before disembowelling him.

Later heroes used force instead of cunning to prove themselves against dragons. The Christian ideal of a knight often saw them having to rescue maidens from the clutches of a dragon. St George is the most famous dragon slayer in Western art but his myth borrows heavily from the legend of Perseus and Andromeda, which predates the notion of chivalry by millennia.



Dragons have always been the favoured beast for brave knights to fight, especially if a maiden requires rescuing

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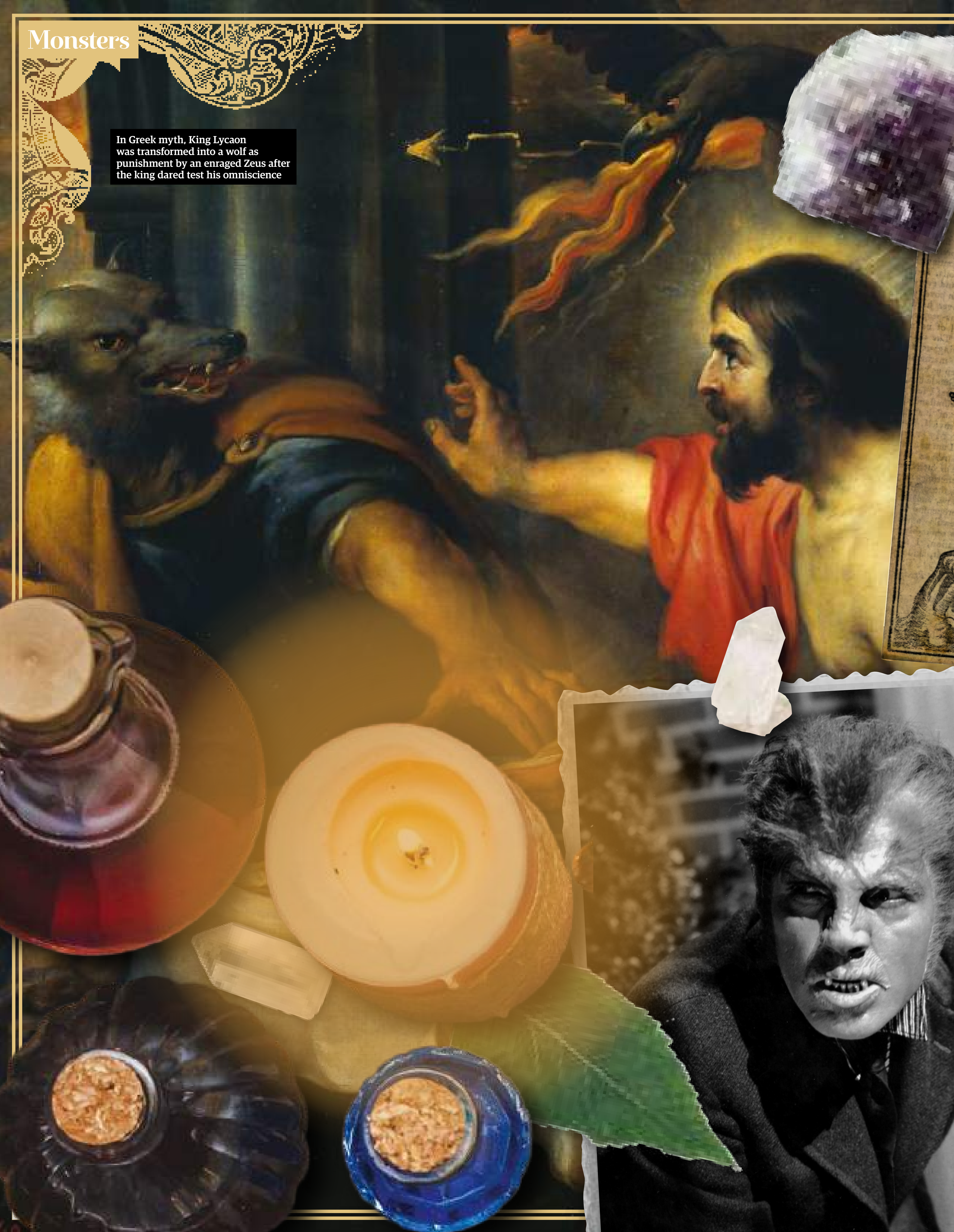
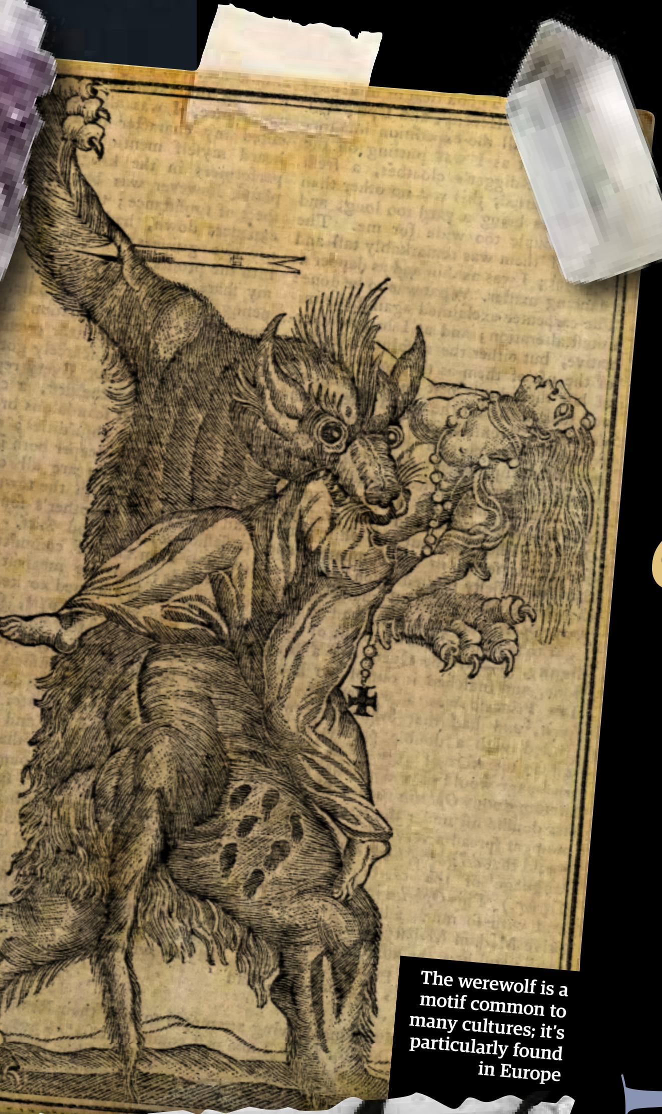


In Greek myth, King Lycaon was transformed into a wolf as punishment by an enraged Zeus after the king dared test his omniscience



The werewolf is a motif common to many cultures; it's particularly found in Europe

Werewolves

The werewolf is one of the oldest types of monster, tracing its history at least as far as the myths of Ancient Greece

Written by Willow Winsham

The concept of men who could change into wolves is an ancient one, with Roman writers Virgil, Pliny the Elder, and Ovid mentioning them in their writings. Greek Herodotus likewise recorded details of a tribe that annually shifted into wolves - their transformation lasted for a period of days before they regained their original form.

Curved fingernails, brows that met in the middle, and an appetite for fresh corpses were all trademark signs of lycanthropic tendencies. There were several ways an individual could become a werewolf. Being bitten by another werewolf under a Full Moon is perhaps the best known. The recitation of certain words, stripping naked before donning a wolfskin belt, being cursed or drinking rainwater from a werewolf's footprint could also lead to an unfortunate transformation into lupine form.

Less well known than the Witch Trials, trials of suspected werewolves also took place in Europe throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, with those accused of being werewolves undergoing trial and, in some cases, conviction. Some ill-fated suspects were condemned to life imprisonment. One historical influence on werewolf lore was the Beast of Gevauden. In 1764 this creature embarked upon a three-year reign of terror, with the final body count at over 80. It was from reports of the eventual slaying of the beast that the idea that silver bullets were fatal to werewolves was introduced.

Given the ferocity of their reputation therefore, it is surprising to learn that not all werewolves are out for blood. The Irish Faoladh, a person who shifts into a wolf, is benevolent, and is better known to protect rather than attack. The Scottish wulver is another, gentle, variant. Not able to shape-shift, the wulver from the Shetland Isles had instead the head of a wolf, but the body of a man. Preferring their own company, they were pleasant when they came into contact with people, and were known to help those who had lost their way or leave freshly caught fish for the poor.

Thankfully being a werewolf was not irreversible, and cures exist in varying degrees of harshness. Exorcism was a popular method, as was an antidote of wolfsbane, or piercing the hands of the afflicted with nails. Addressing the wolf by its name three times was enough in some areas of Germany, whereas in Denmark, one simply had to give the werewolf a good telling off.

There have been various attempts to ground the werewolf legend in fact. Tales of lycanthropy have been explained as sufferers of conditions such as porphyria or rabies, or simply mass hysteria.

Modern werewolves owe much to their depictions in print and on screen. *Werewolf of London* was the first mainstream werewolf movie, in 1935

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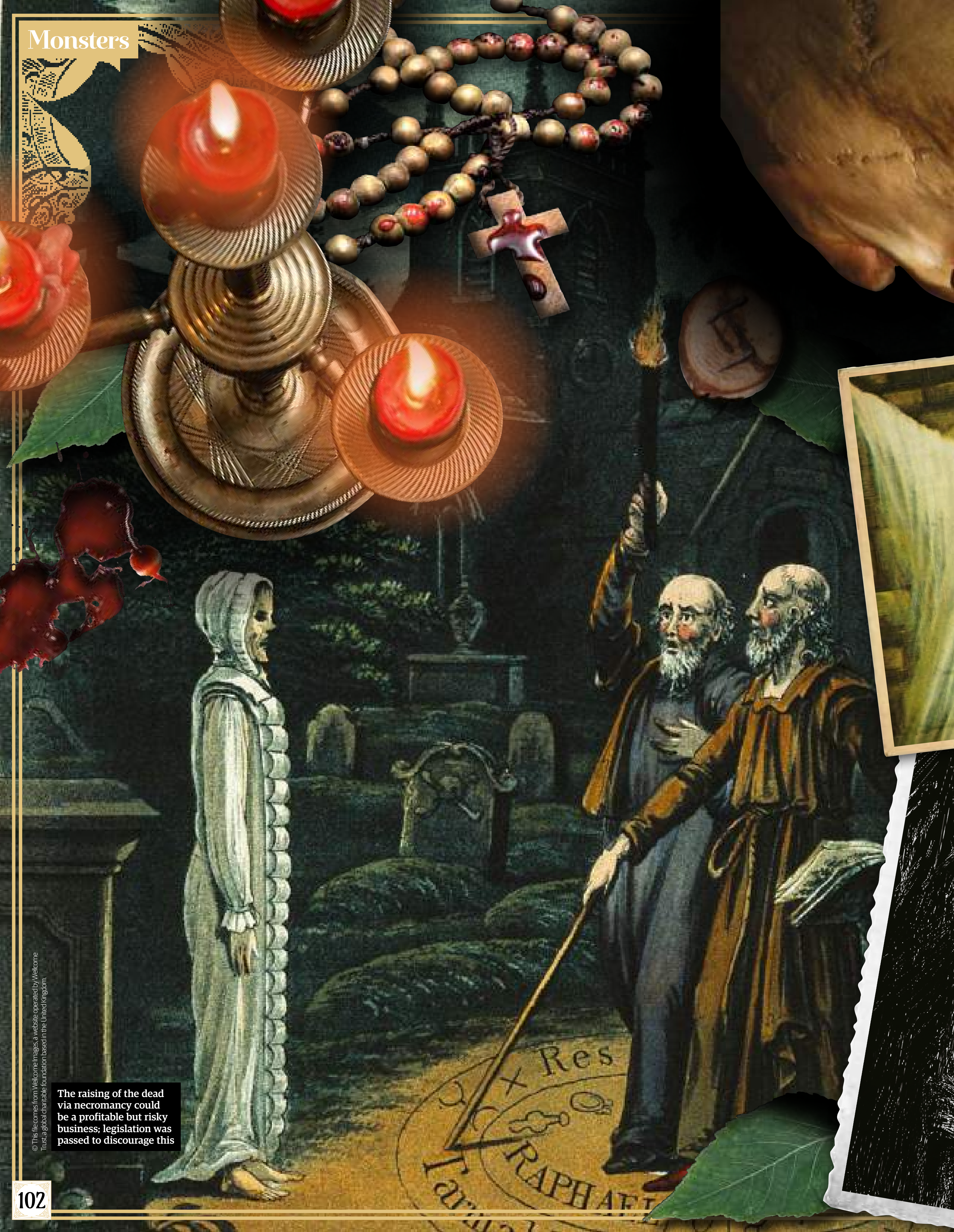

The raising of the dead via necromancy could be a profitable but risky business; legislation was passed to discourage this

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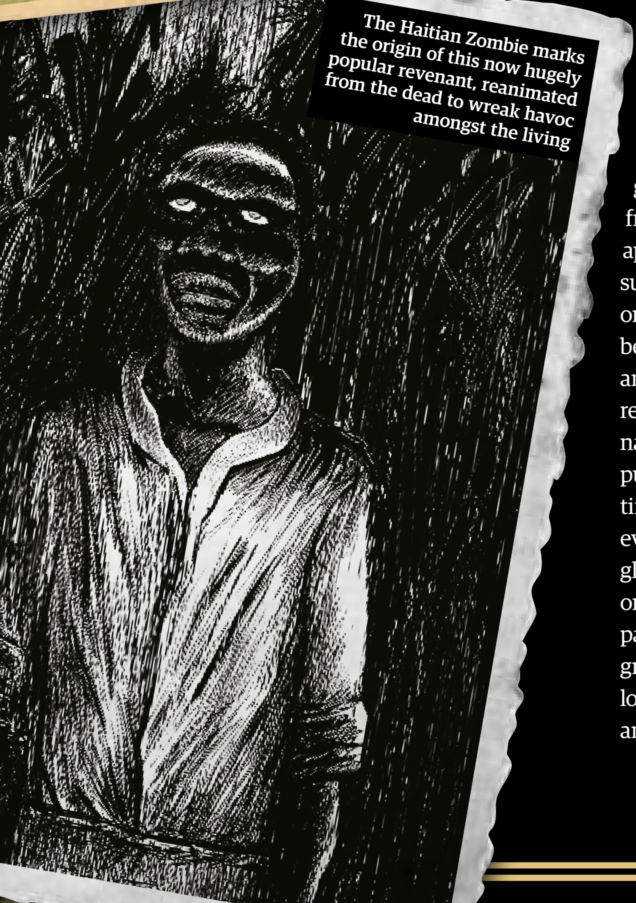
The idea that the soul or spirit lives on after death is one of the most universal beliefs across the globe



The Haitian Zombie marks the origin of this now hugely popular revenant, reanimated from the dead to wreak havoc amongst the living

The undead

Revenants, zombies and ghosts are traditionally thought to wander after death in cultures worldwide

Written by Willow Winsham

Belief in the survival of the human soul after death, by logical extension, has given rise to a long and enduring belief that the dead, in various forms, can return to interact with the living. Either through their own power, in order to complete unfinished business, or at the behest of another, the restless undead, and how to deal with them, is a motif that occurs in the folklore of nearly all religions and cultures.

Incorporeal ghosts often return with a message or lesson for the living. Some speak to those who encounter them, while others are mute, and while some ghosts are obvious from the outset, others appear solid until a sign, such as lack of footprints, or vanishing into thin air, betrays them. Some ghosts are benign, while others are reported to be malevolent in nature. Often, a ghost returns to put right a matter left unfinished at the time of their death. With love believed to endure even beyond the grave, there are many tales of ghostly lovers returning to their love left behind, or the ghosts of those who have died in a lovers' pact. Many famous ghosts, such as various grey, green, or white ladies, are associated with specific locations, as are ghostly nuns, ill-fated monarchs and phantom armies.

A revenant – from the French for 'the returning', tends to describe a corpse that has been reanimated, often purposefully raised from death with the purpose of plaguing the living. In Norse mythology, there is the 'again walker' or aptgangr. The zombie, originating in Haitian folklore, is a reanimated corpse controlled by a bokor or witch; they have no will of their own. Although popular culture has frequently linked zombies with voodoo, the religion does not include them within its practices. Zombies can also appear in incorporeal form, the spirit selling for a pretty penny if captured and bottled. The word 'zombie' was first used in English in 1819, by the poet Robert Southey, in a history of Brazil.

> Some legends feature incorporeal ghosts and spirits, while others feature reanimated corpses. Both are equally terrifying

The Norse draugr are terrible, grave-dwelling creatures. Of immense strength, they can alter their size at will, and are believed to be guarding the treasure buried with them. Vengeful and vicious, they hunt down not only those who did them wrong in life, but are also known for violently attacking anyone who crosses their path.

Ghouls, graveyard-dwelling demons from Arabian folklore, also have a penchant for human flesh. In some cases, a ghoul gruesomely takes the form of the most recent person it consumes. In other instances they manifest as beautiful women who lead their beguiled victims astray into the wastes in order to feed on them.

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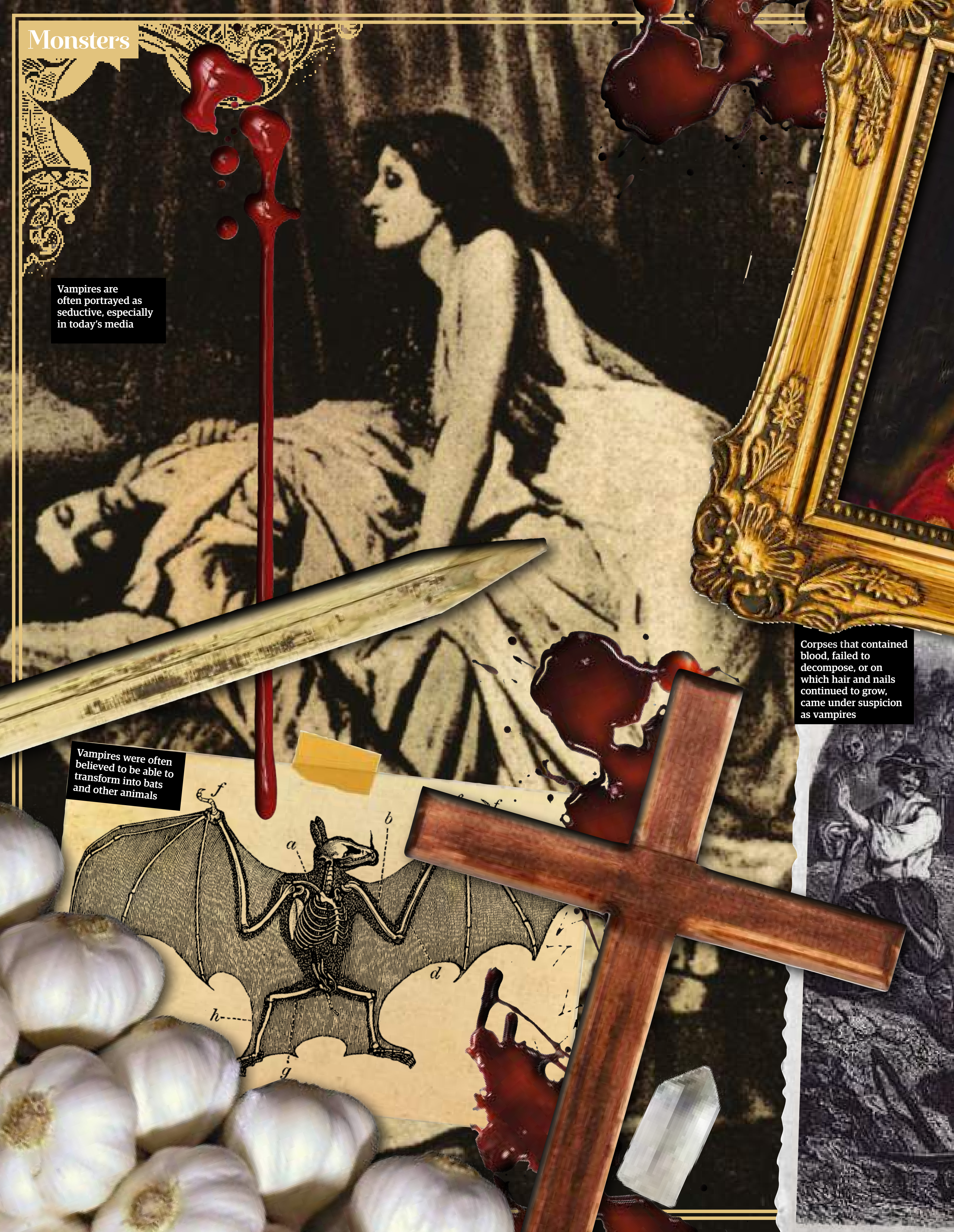
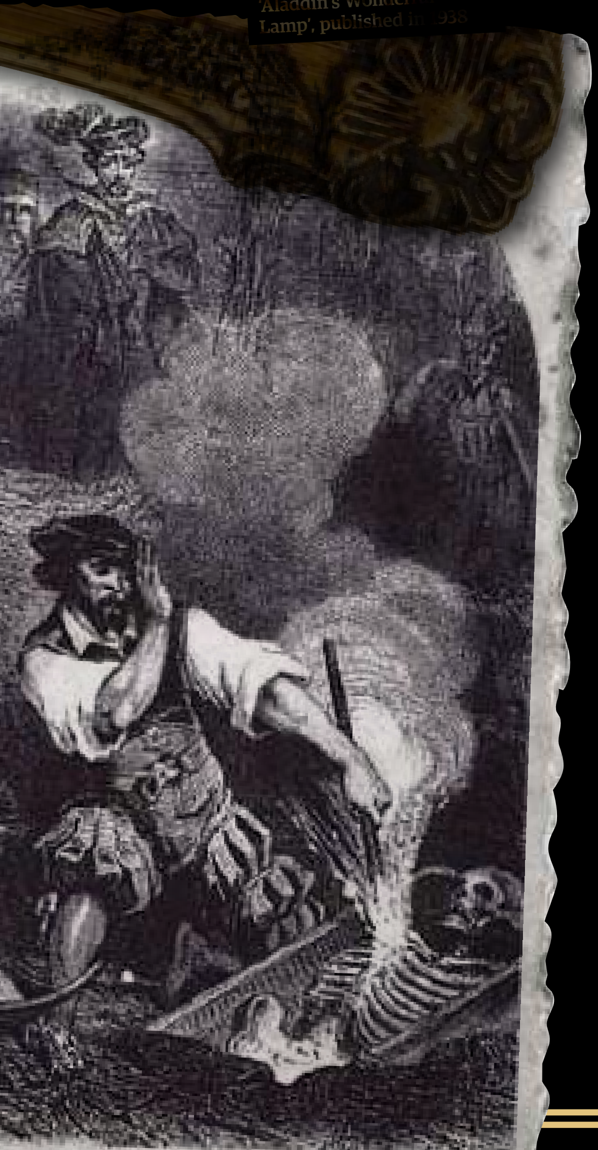


Vampires are often portrayed as seductive, especially in today's media

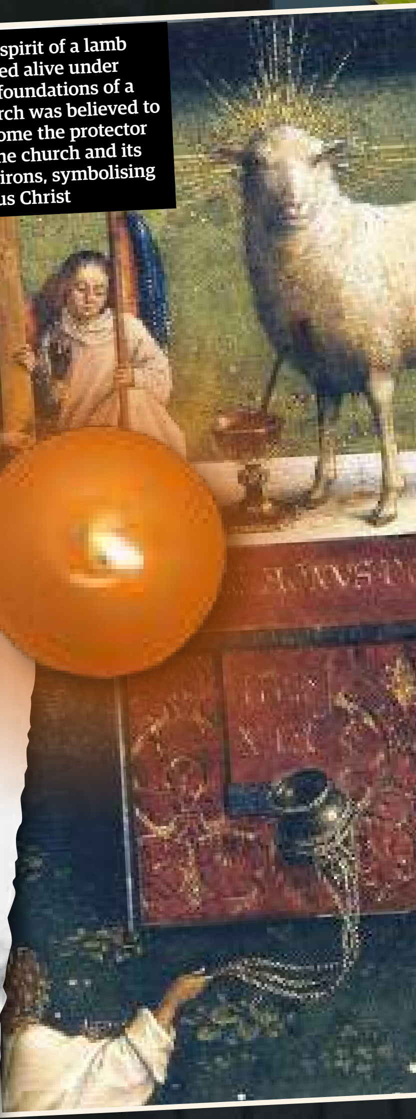
Vampires were often believed to be able to transform into bats and other animals

Corpses that contained blood, failed to decompose, or on which hair and nails continued to grow, came under suspicion as vampires

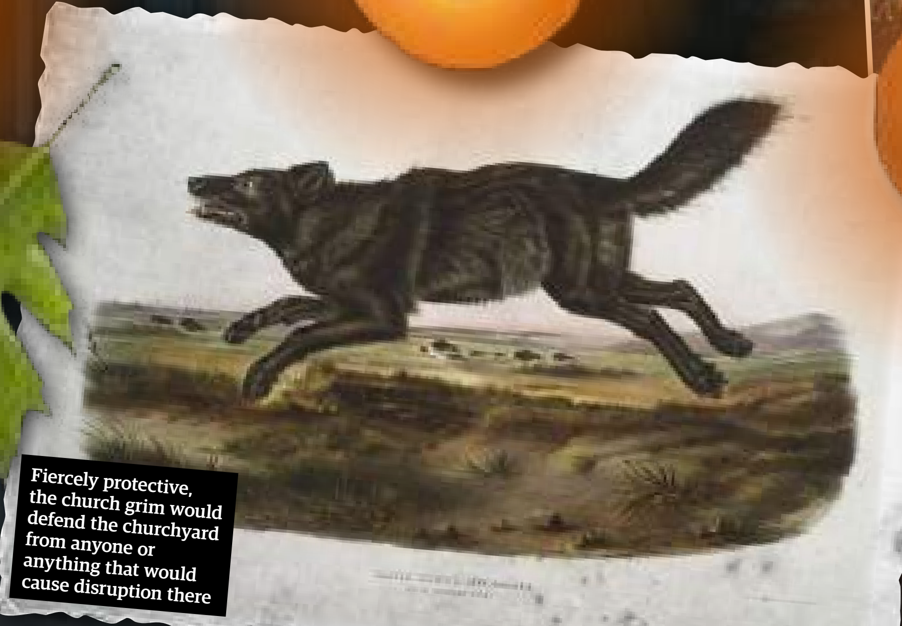


An illustration by Edmund Dulac of the djinn from 'Aladdin's Wonderful Lamp', published in 1938

To witness the grim could foretell a death or other momentous events to come, and it was a brave soul indeed who ventured near



The spirit of a lamb buried alive under the foundations of a church was believed to become the protector of the church and its environs, symbolising Jesus Christ



Fiercely protective, the church grim would defend the churchyard from anyone or anything that would cause disruption there

The church grim

Meant to be the protector of ancient churches, the grim can nonetheless instill fear even in the innocent

Written by Willow Winsham

The church grim is a curious sort of spirit, acting as guardian over a church and its churchyard. Present in English and Scandinavian folklore, the grim has a specific and crucial role: to protect its charge from the unruly and sacrilegious, or anyone who would seek to cause damage there. Witches, thieves, vandals, or the Devil himself, all could be kept out by the shadowy grim.

Where do grims originate? It is said that they are the spirit of an animal buried alive within the foundations of the church, or, in some cases, the spirit of the first person to be buried within the churchyard. Animals used as such 'foundation sacrifices' include horses, pigs, boars and dogs. Sightings of grims take many forms, but one of the most commonly sighted is a large, black dog. These spine-chilling creatures often appeared during inclement weather, the blustery, storm-ridden night adding to the terror of catching sight of this dark guardian.

The grim can take several forms; the most common one is a large, fierce black dog that guards the church and its graveyard

The Yorkshire grim not only provided protection, but could also act as an ominous portent. It was believed that they could foretell the next death to occur, signalling the fact by ringing the church bells at the Witching Hour. Would a soul go to Heaven or Hell? If the priest looked upward he might receive an answer from the grim, watching proceedings from the church tower and nodding.

The Danish kirkegrim or Swedish kykogrim had its work cut out. Not only protecting their churchyard from the usual vandalism, they could also be found doing valiant battle against the strand-varsler, the spirits of the dead lost at sea. Unable to rest, their bodies denied a proper burial, these spirits fought to enter the churchyard, the grim fighting to keep them out.

A less fearsome but equally powerful variation of the grim is that of the church lamb. Said to have been buried under the church foundations, the spirit lamb - meant to represent Christ - could be seen both in the church and in the yard outside; if the latter, it was thought to herald the death of a child. In Kroskjoberg, the grave-sow was witnessed, not only in the churchyard but also in the streets, a foretelling of death to come.

A Scottish variant of the grim is the idea that the spirit of the person buried last in the kirkyard was bound to protect it, but only until the next person to be interred there.

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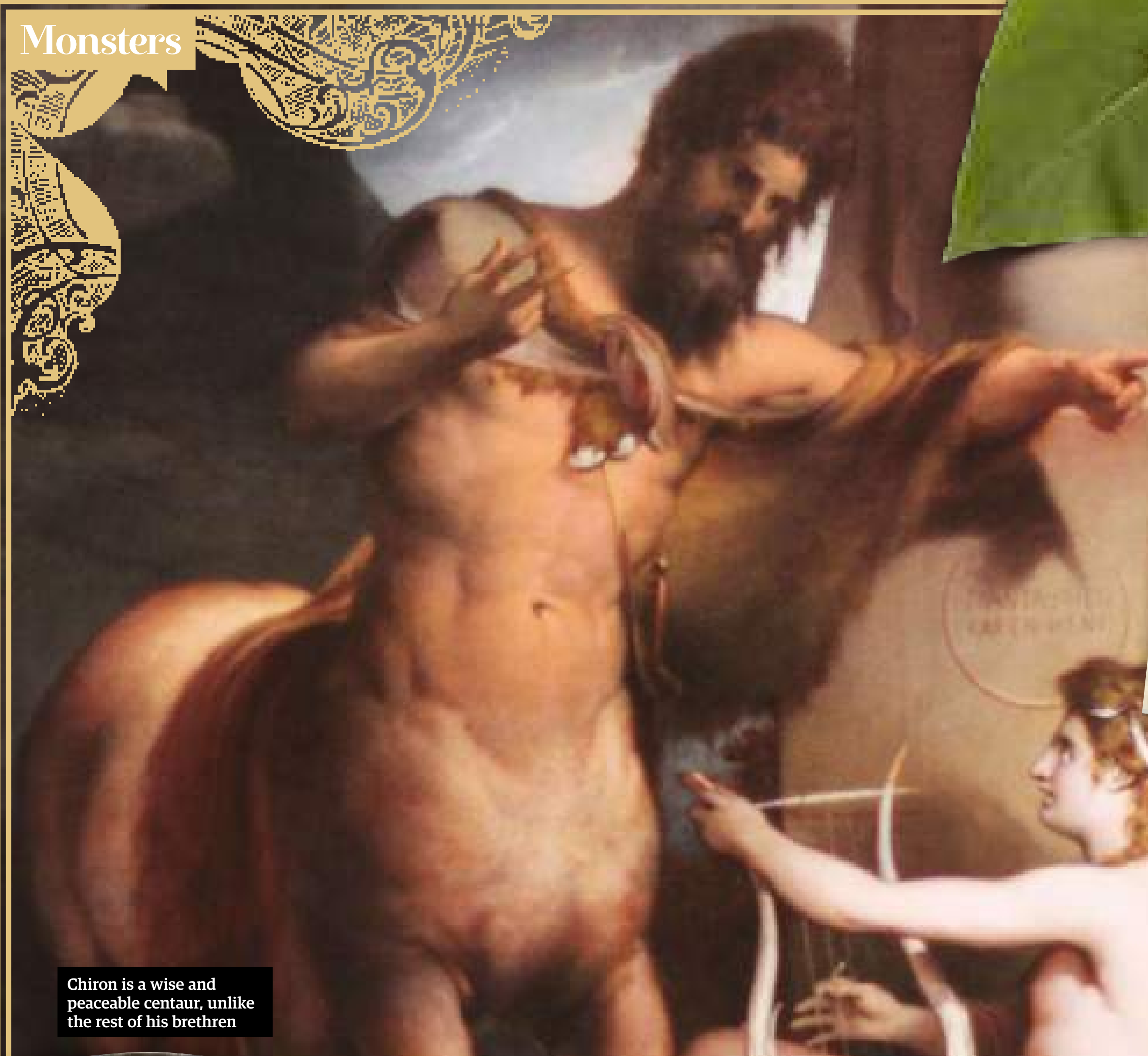

Chiron is a wise and peaceable centaur, unlike the rest of his brethren

The half woman, half bird harpy was aptly named as a 'human vulture' by Ovid, and were known throughout antiquity for their terrible ugliness

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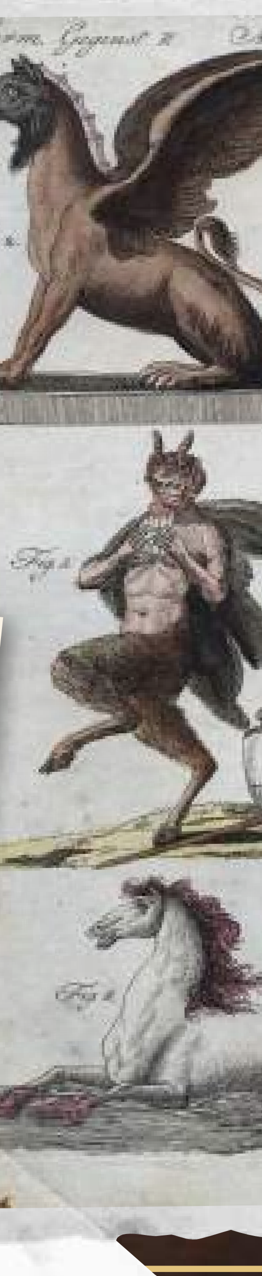
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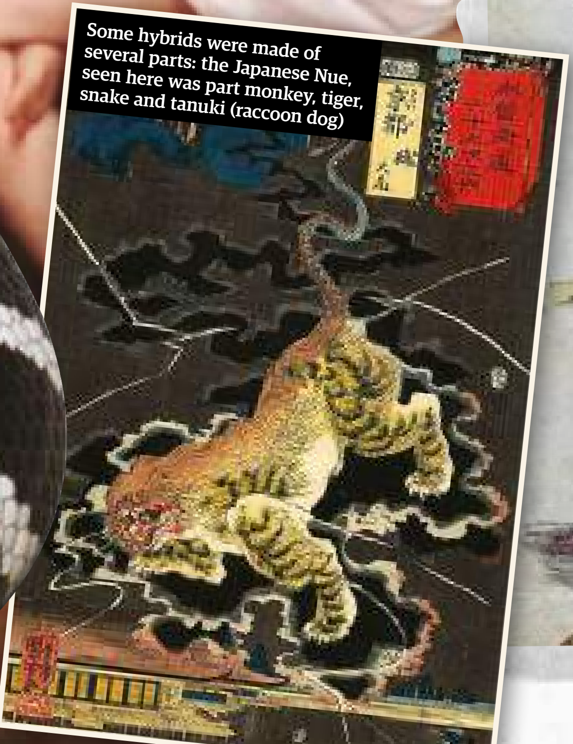
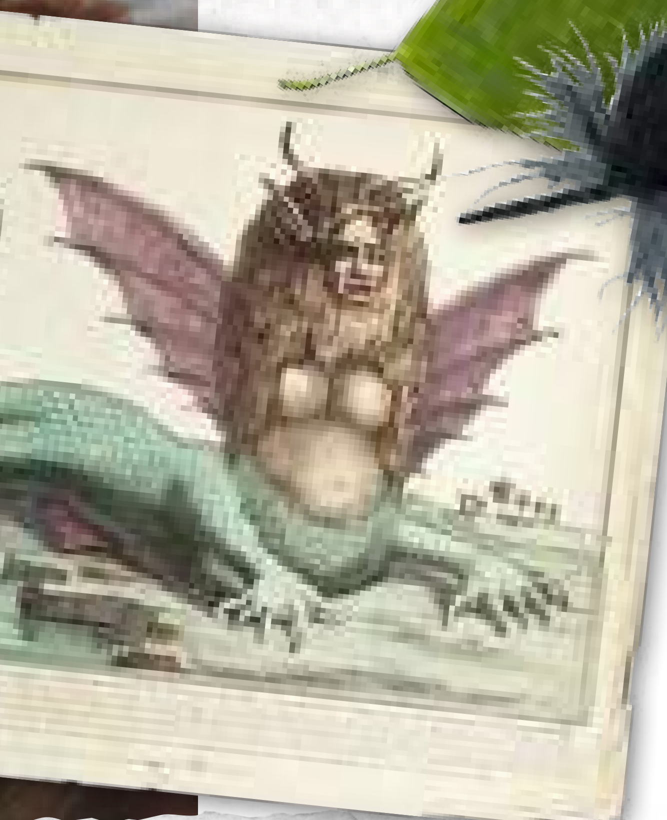


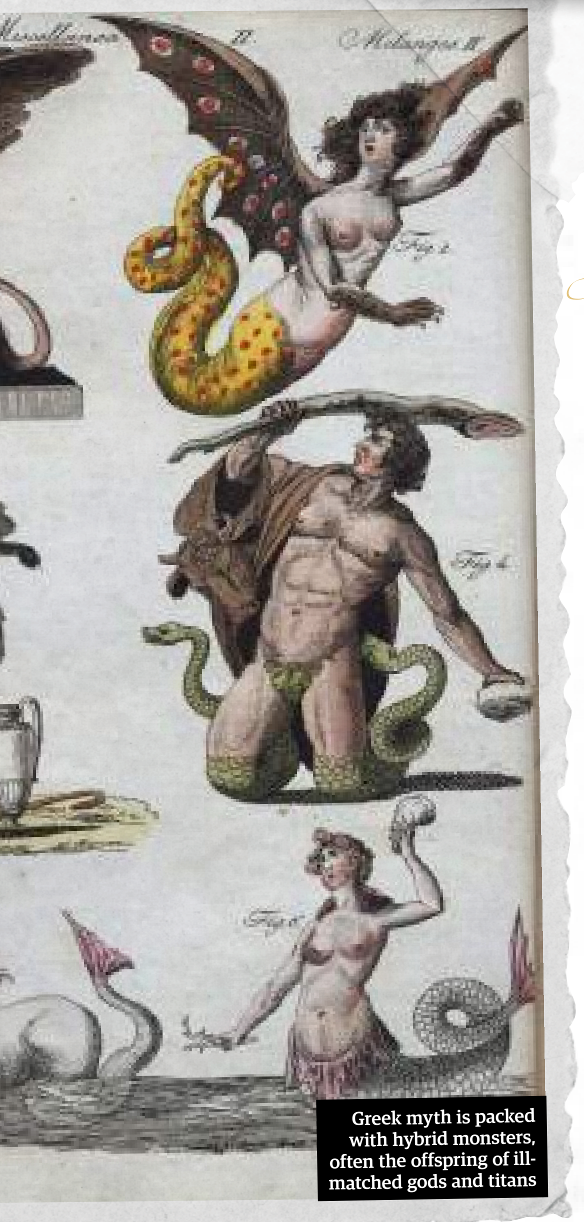
Some hybrids were made of several parts: the Japanese Nue, seen here was part monkey, tiger, snake and tanuki (raccoon dog)



Hybrids

Fantastic crossbreeds of ordinary animals produced fabulous beasts in the imagination of the ancient world and beyond

Written by Willow Winsham



Greek myth is packed with hybrid monsters, often the offspring of ill-matched gods and titans

Hybrid creatures, those composed of a combination of human or animal physical features, have frequented folklore and legends for centuries. Such hybrids are often terrible in temperament and terrifying to behold, and often a hero is faced with the task of slaying one in order to succeed in his quest or journey.

The manticores of Persian legend are a human/animal hybrid, a creature with a human head, a lion's body, and a tail covered with poisonous quills, which it shoots at those who it perceives to be a threat. This creature, meaning 'man eater', passed into European folklore in 4th century BCE via Ctesias' account of India. Although he was sceptical of their actual existence, others believed, including Pliny the Elder. The manticore was said to be unbeatable, and could devour even the largest creature without leaving so much as the bones behind.

Another part-human, part-animal creature is the centaur, a creature with a human upper body and the lower body of a horse. Centaurs were referenced by various authors of classical Greece, and also appear in both Roman mythology and the bestiaries of the medieval period. One early, suggested origin of the centaur myth was the confusion of seeing man on horseback on the part of societies that did not ride.

Other combinations include human/goat hybrids such as fauns or the terrifying Krampus, human/fish, human/snake, and the avatar of the Hindu god Vishnu, the human/tortoise hybrid, Kurma.

There were also hybrids with a human lower half and an animal upper body and head. These included many of the Egyptian gods such as jackal-headed Anubis and Kheph, with the head of a dung beetle.

Some hybrids had no human part at all, and instead were a composite of different animal parts. The chimera of Greek mythology first recorded in Homer's *Iliad* is described as a lion at the forefront, with a goat on its back. To complete the terrifying combination, it often had a tail ending with the head of a snake. Unlike some, the chimera was almost universally considered to be female, and her appearance was said to herald disaster. This fire-breathing terror was finally defeated by the hero Bellerophon.

The cockatrice, a dragonesque creature with a rooster's head, was a legend from the 12th century. It was particularly deadly, with the ability to kill by touch, or, spectacularly, by just looking at its victim. It was equally deadly to itself; catching sight of its own reflection could cause its death.

> "Hybrids are often terrible in temperament and terrifying to behold"

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Dragons

Four legs bad, no legs good? Why dragons in their various guises are a staple of folklore all around the world

Written by Willow Winsham

Who hasn't, as a child, been fascinated and terrified in equal measure by tales of terrible winged, fire-breathing dragons abducting fairytale princesses and laying waste to the land around them? Indeed, stories of such fearsome beasts living in caves where they hoard untold riches are a staple of many a story.

The original dragons of folklore and belief however were actually large, four-legged serpents that featured in the myths and legends of the ancient Near East. Unlike modern dragons, these specimens had no wings, and include Apep from the mythology of ancient Egypt, the 16-yard long, flint-headed God of Chaos, and the Leviathan from the Hebrew Bible.

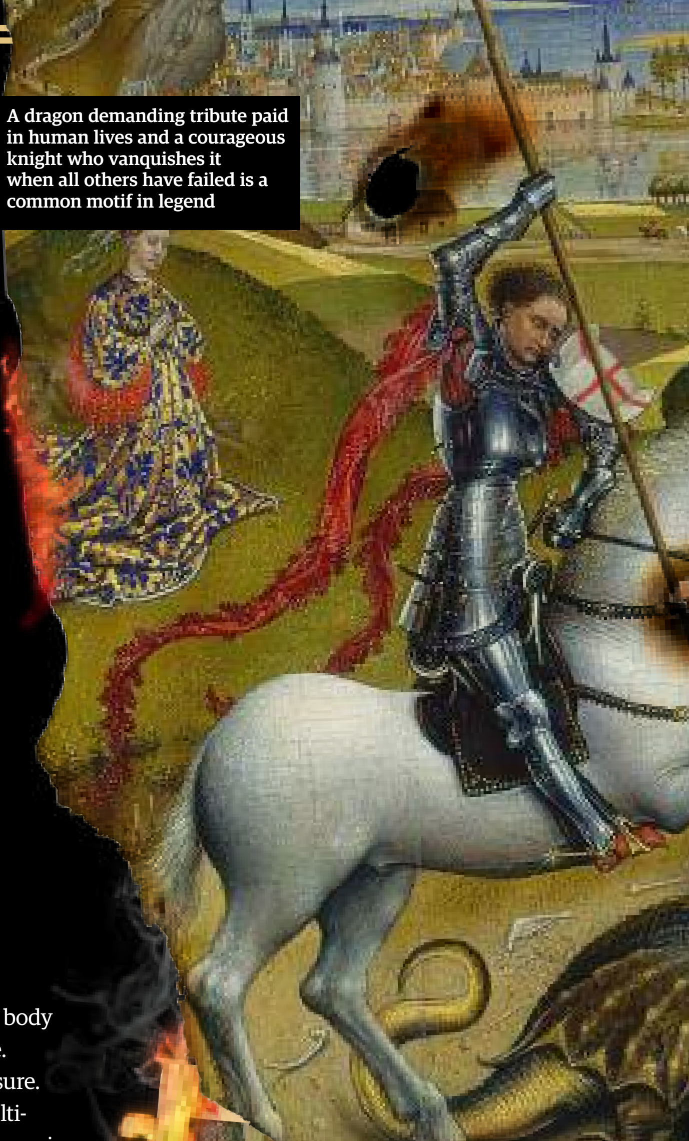
The dragons found in Western folklore from the Middle Ages onwards are what most people today would recognise as a dragon. With four legs, breathing fire, a magnificent beast with wings and horns, these dragons were often troublesome, and many stories feature a quest to defeat one, often after many have already failed and been devoured by the monster. Typical in English folklore, one such tale tells of the Bisterne Dragon, a vicious creature finally defeated by a knight, whose body is turned into a hill as a reminder of the tale. Other dragons are famous for hoarding treasure.

Slavic dragons, on the other hand, are multi-headed and fire-breathing, with the Russian zmei, Zmey Gorynych, having as many as 12 heads by some tellings. Gorynych was said to cause eclipses by swallowing the sun. According to Slavic lore, the most dangerous of snakes, the adder, on reaching a century old, would grow wings and transform into a dragon. Dragons are also linked to controlling the weather; they were known to cause storms, and one tale tells of a dragon causing a flood by draining a lake with its tail before releasing the torrent.

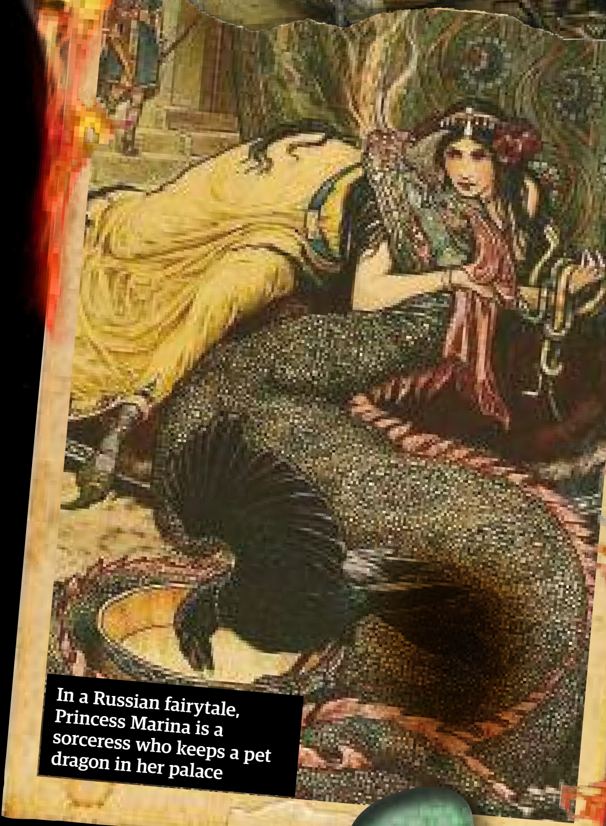
Western dragons with two legs rather than four are known as wyverns and are legendary guardians of the River Thames

Hoping to find a dragon? Hunting in the mountains or hidden deep in the forests are the most likely locations. The Russian chudo-yudo, potential child of Baba Yaga, however, is to be found in water, and, due to his weather-controlling abilities, is often held responsible for times of drought.

Despite their bad press, not all dragons are malevolent in nature. The snake-like, four legged Chinese dragons are associated with power and luck, and in Japan, dragons are known for granting wishes. In Bulgaria and Serbia, dragons are believed to stand guard over crops as they grow, preventing attack from lurking demons.



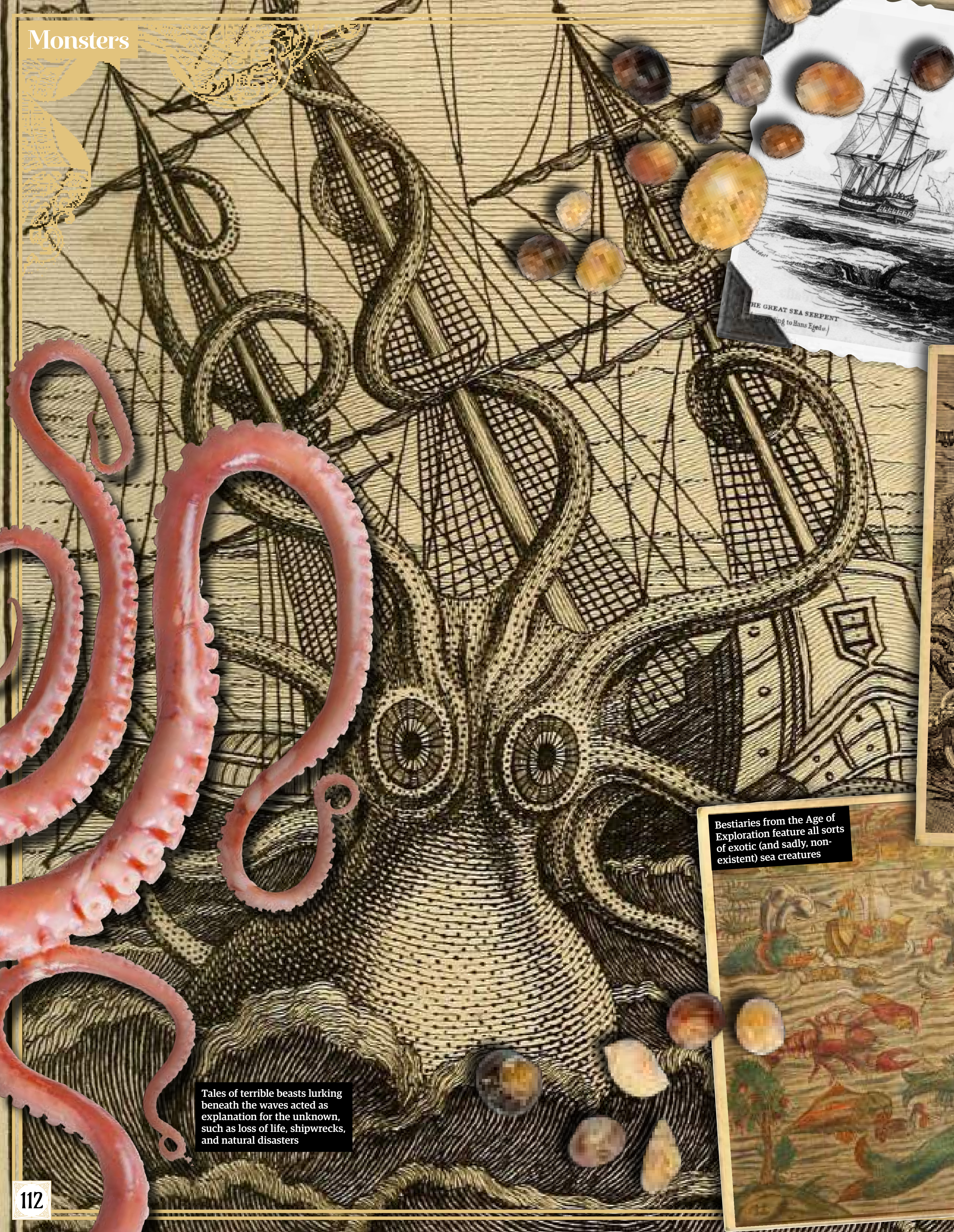
A dragon demanding tribute paid in human lives and a courageous knight who vanquishes it when all others have failed is a common motif in legend



In a Russian fairytale, Princess Marina is a sorceress who keeps a pet dragon in her palace

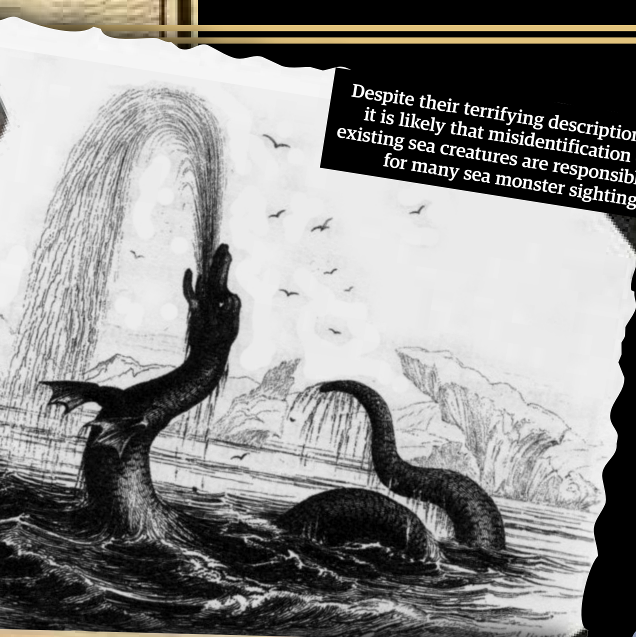
Dragons of folklore and fairytale are often wily, intelligent creatures, a trait shared with the serpents with whom they were originally associated

Although dragons have been popularised in recent times by such shows as *Game of Thrones*, interest in these fire-breathing beasts has been strong for centuries


THE GREAT SEA SERPENT
(according to Hans Egede.)

Tales of terrible beasts lurking beneath the waves acted as explanation for the unknown, such as loss of life, shipwrecks, and natural disasters

Bestiaries from the Age of Exploration feature all sorts of exotic (and sadly, non-existent) sea creatures



Despite their terrifying descriptions, it is likely that misidentification of existing sea creatures are responsible for many sea monster sightings

Sea monsters

With the depths of the seas less explored than the surface of the Moon, it's no surprise that we've populated them with fantastical creatures

Written by Willow Winsham

Tales of large, mysterious creatures that lurk beneath the waves feature in folklore wherever a civilisation has contact with the sea. Their size, and elusive and often hostile or violent nature, reflects one of humankind's greatest fears and preoccupations: the unpredictable nature of the sea. These denizens of the deep can cause destruction and chaos, drowning sailors in their hundreds, or swallowing a ship whole without breaking a sweat.

Such monsters are far from a modern invention either, and sightings have been recorded and invented since time immemorial. Homer's 8th century BCE hero Odysseus encountered Scylla - a six-headed sea monster - and Charybdis, a ship-eating whirlpool, and was forced to choose which of the two he would face on passing through the Strait of Messina.

The Kraken is another familiar name, reported in the seas off Greenland and Norway, and is one of the largest of folklore's giant sea-dwelling monsters. Descriptions of this beast have shifted over time; initially closer to a whale-like creature, from the 18th century onwards the Kraken was increasingly likened to the many-tentacled squid-like creature we recognise today. Erik Pontoppidan was the first to describe its grasping tentacles.

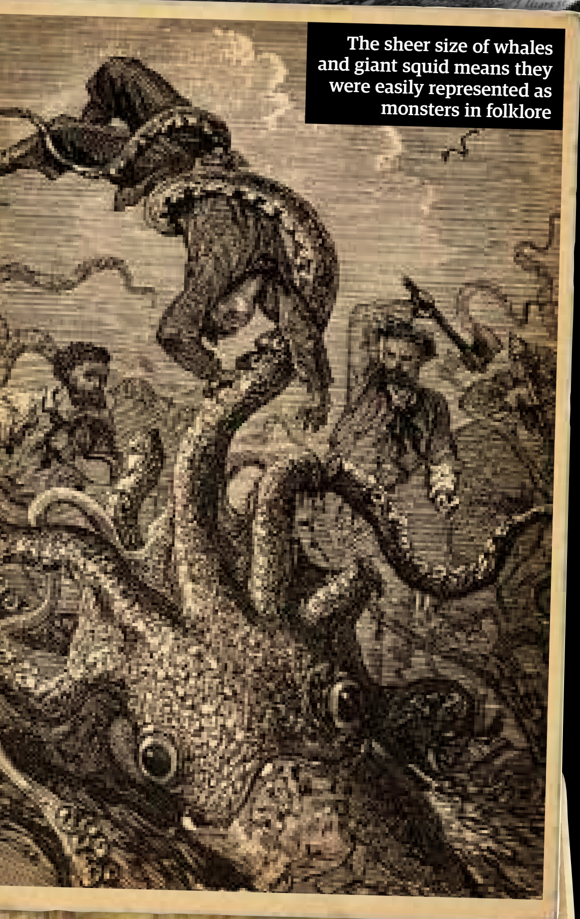
The Norse Jormungandr, or Midgard Serpent, is famous in Scandinavian mythology as the enemy of Thor. Encircling the world, when it releases its tail, Ragnarok - the destruction and rebirth of the world - will begin.

Much less common to find is the sea monster that brings prosperity rather than destruction. A Tlingit legend tells of Gunakedeit, a monster that is part-wolf, part-whale that, in some versions of the story, helped those starving in an Alaskan village. The creature is actually said to be a man who shifts into monster form.

There are several more mundane explanations for the many sea monster sightings throughout history. Typhoons, hurricanes and other natural phenomena could have played their part in the creation of tales of monster-caused damage. Remnants from the age of dinosaurs, such as descendants of plesiosaurs or icthyosaurs, could also have spurred stories. From sea kelp or flotsam floating on the water to misidentification of squid and whales, these can all, say sceptics, account for the majority of supposed monsters. This has failed to dampen enthusiasm for these monsters of the deep, and sightings continue today.

In fiction, the titular Moby Dick is perhaps one of the most well known sea monsters, with HP Lovecraft's fictional Cthulhu inspiring popular imagination up to the present day.

> "These denizens of the deep can cause destruction and chaos"



The sheer size of whales and giant squid means they were easily represented as monsters in folklore

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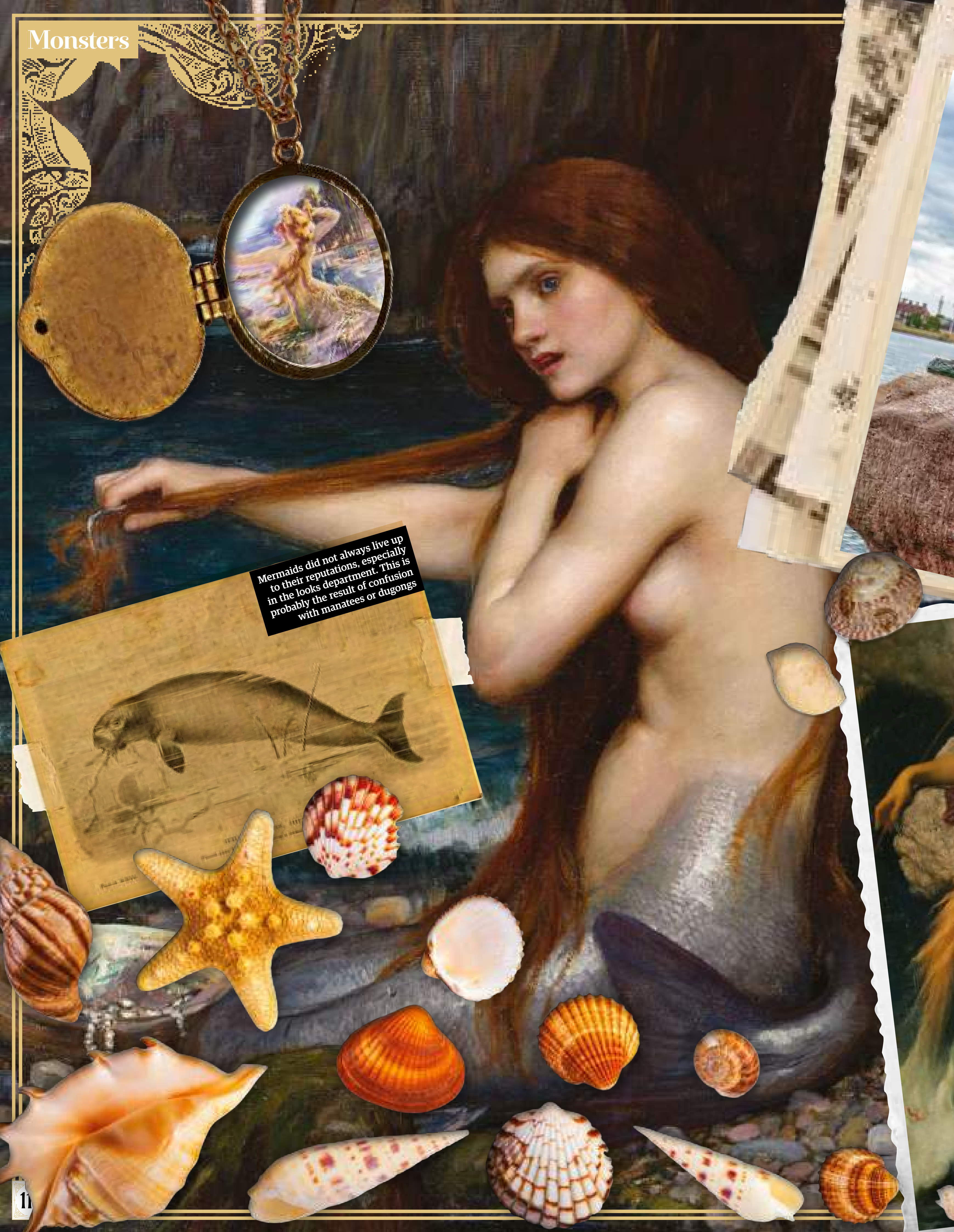


Mermaids did not always live up to their reputations, especially in the looks department. This is probably the result of confusion with manatees or dugongs

Hans Christian Andersen's Little Mermaid is commemorated by the bronze mermaid statue by Edvard Eriksen in the water outside Copenhagen

Mermaids

From seductive sirens and Disney princesses to a shimmering sea-inspired makeup and hair look, the beauty of mermaids has been inspiring us for centuries

Written by Willow Winsham

One of the most alluring creatures of folklore is the half-woman/half-fish mermaid. She is often pictured thus: elegantly perched on a rock, stunning tail idly lapping the water as she combs her golden tresses, the epitome of beauty. Tales of mermaids are frequent across the world, featuring in the folklore of Asia, Africa and Europe among others. These mermaids, however, can look very different to our modern ideas of these creatures.

The earliest mermaid on record is the goddess Atargatis. Having fallen in love with a mortal man, she found herself with child. Shamed and filled with guilt, Atargatis threw herself into the sea, killing herself. The heartbroken goddess was saved by her beauty however, and was only half transformed into a fish, her upper body remaining in her original form.

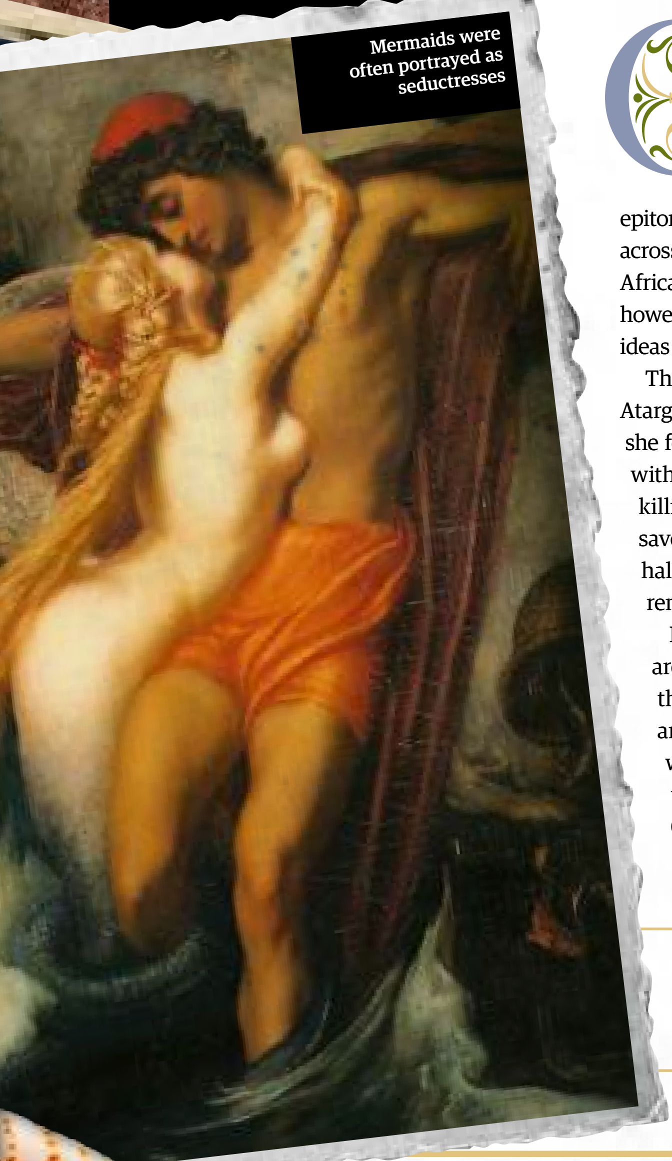
Mermaids generally receive bad press, and are held responsible for many of the tragedies that occur at sea, such as storms, shipwrecks, and the drowning of sailors. The Lara of Brazil was particularly known for tempting sailors to her undersea palace and a watery grave. Greek legend had it that Thessalonike, sister of Alexander the Great, was a mermaid. Asking sailors if her brother lived, she capsized any ship that gave the wrong answer, sparing no one in her anger.

Mermaids could however prove benevolent when it suited them, or even actively help humans who came across them. There are tales of mermaids teaching skills or passing on secrets to a person who has shown them kindness. Mermaids and their trysts with humans are common. The mermaid of Zennor fell in love with a young man at the church there, their love of singing and the beauty of their voices sparking a connection between the pair. Both vanished, the mermaid, so the story goes, taking the object of her affections back to her watery home.

Christopher Columbus was unimpressed by the 'mermaids' he spotted on his 1493 voyage, slating them for their lack of the beauty he had been led to expect of such exotic creatures. Explanations for mermaid sightings include confusion between this exotic creature of myth and legend with the more mundane manatees or sea cows.

The most famous mermaid of fairytale is no doubt that of Hans Christian Andersen's story of *The Little Mermaid*. Love of a mortal man brought her downfall, though she was redeemed due to the selflessness of her sacrifice.

> "There are tales of mermaids teaching skills or passing on secrets"



Mermaids were often portrayed as seductresses

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Fairies

Don't be fooled by the pretty winged creatures of Victorian literature. In legend, fairies are ancient, clever, capricious and often dangerous

Written by Willow Winsham

Far removed from the sanitised, sparkly, benevolent creatures of recent times, the fairies, fae, or fair folk of folklore are a different breed altogether. These staples of European folklore are most commonly found in human form, albeit diminutive in size, and were believed to live underground, emerging to interact either directly or indirectly with the human world above.

Often dressed in green, unlike many other creatures in folklore, there is no consensus on what exactly fairies are. Some theories say they are demoted angels or pagan deities, reworked to fit a new theological framework. Others suggest that they're spirits of the restless dead, or demons.

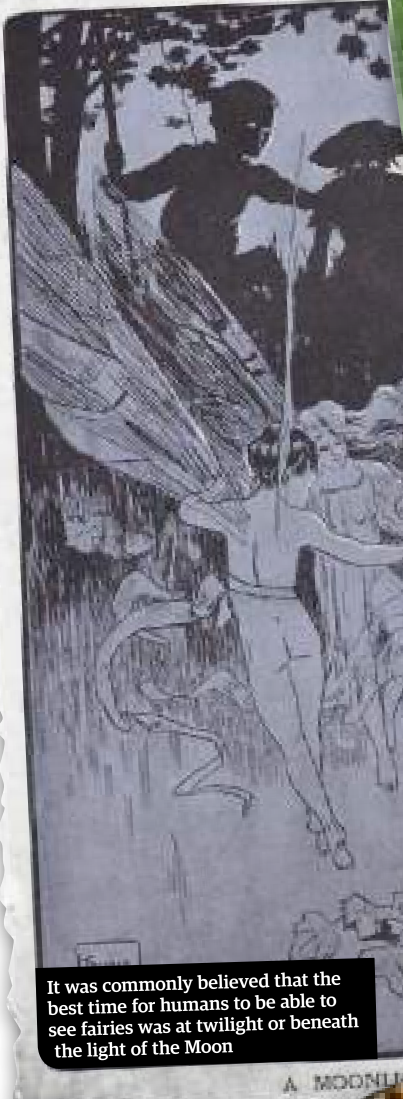
Despite their prevalence in Victorian artwork, traditionally, fairies did not sport wings. This did not, however, preclude them from flight; favoured modes of moving through the air included riding stems or twigs, and good old-fashioned magic.

Fairies were held responsible for a range of behaviours. Misdirecting travellers, pilfering small items from households and knotting the hair of sleeping humans and animals could all be taken as irritating fairy pranks. They were also charged frequently with more serious crimes such as kidnapping humans – either swapping a person with a wooden 'corpse' to trick family and friends into believing they had died, or replacing a human child with a fairy changeling when left unattended in the cradle. According to Scottish lore, fairies are separated into two groups, the Seelie and Unseelie Courts. The former were known for carrying out more lighthearted pranks, but the latter were both malevolent and dangerous, to be avoided at all costs.

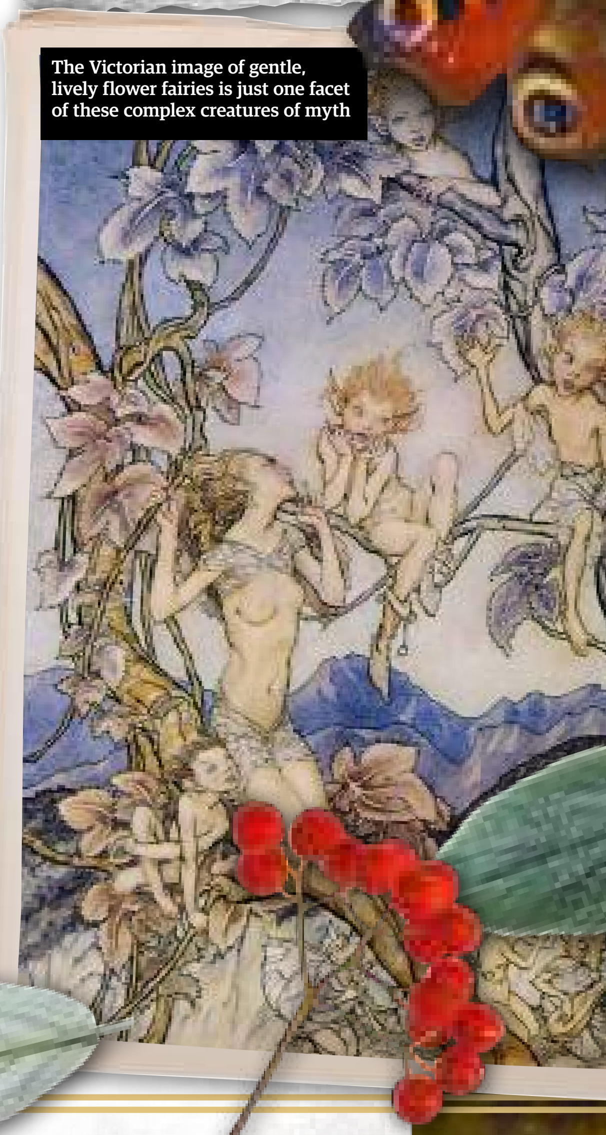
Due to their perceived malevolence, several antidotes to fairy mayhem were available. Iron was one such deterrent; believed to be fatal to the fae, it was often left in or near a cradle in the hope of protecting the child sleeping within. Dry bread concealed on one's person was another sure-fire method of protection. It was also said that to wear your clothes inside out or have a piece of a rowan tree about your person would keep you from succumbing to their powerful magic.

Many tales include cautions that one should never eat food or drink from a fairy, especially if visiting their underground world. To do so would leave you stranded there; time in the real world rushing past while in slower, fairy time, your life was passing you by. It was possible to return to tell the tale; convicted witch, Isobel Gowdie, described at length her visits to the fairy realm, and Thomas the Rhymer made good his escape, albeit after seven years. 17th century Scottish folklorist Reverend Robert Kirk was believed to have returned to the fairy world forever, taken there as he had learned too much about them and might betray the secrets of the fairies. Some legends say he's now the Fairy Queen's chaplain.

> Arthur Conan Doyle, inventor of professional cynic and rationalist Sherlock Holmes, was actually a firm believer in fairies



It was commonly believed that the best time for humans to be able to see fairies was at twilight or beneath the light of the Moon



The Victorian image of gentle, lively flower fairies is just one facet of these complex creatures of myth

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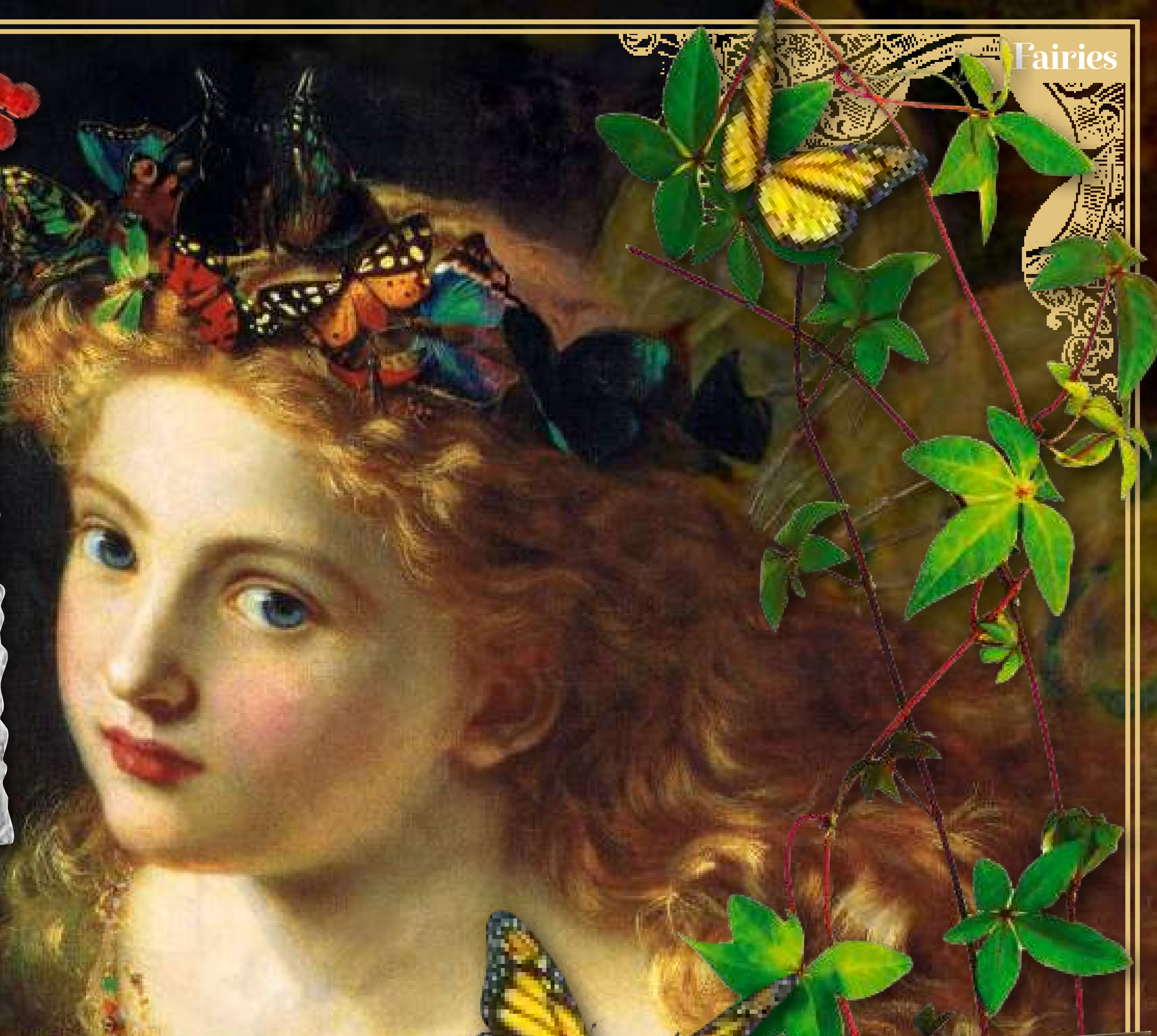
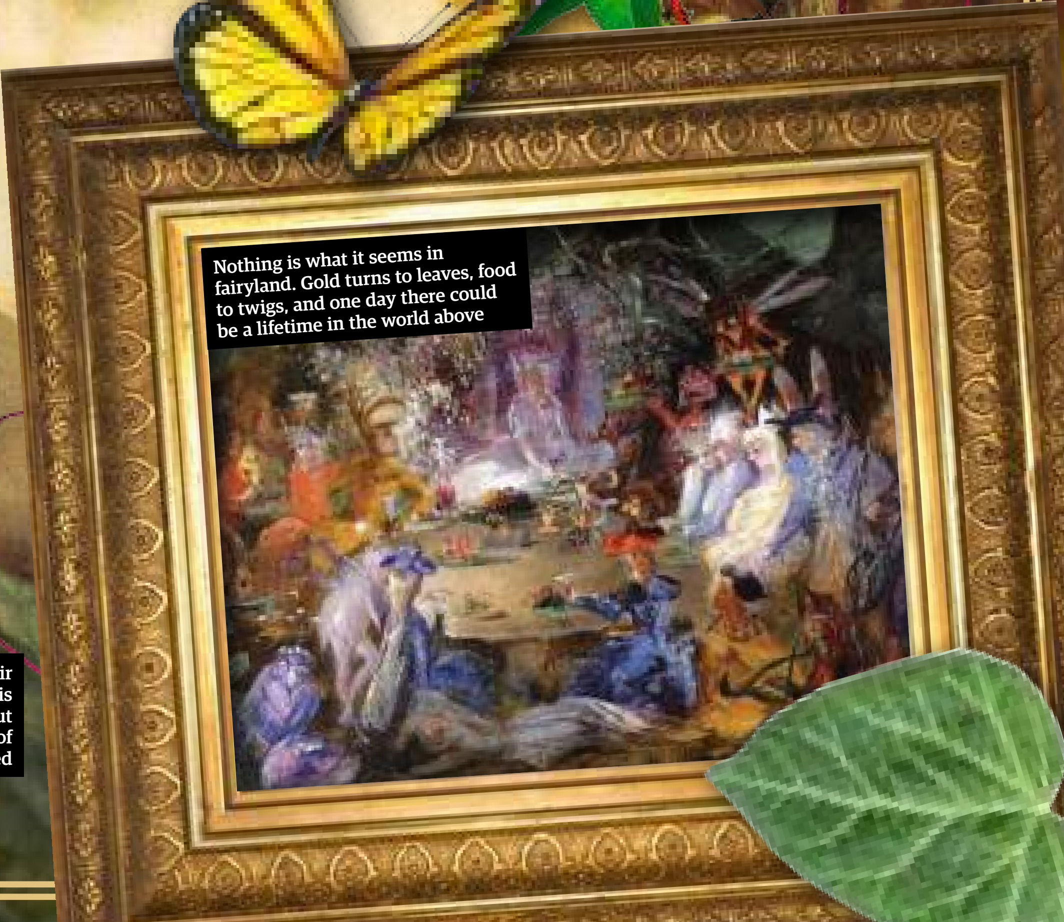
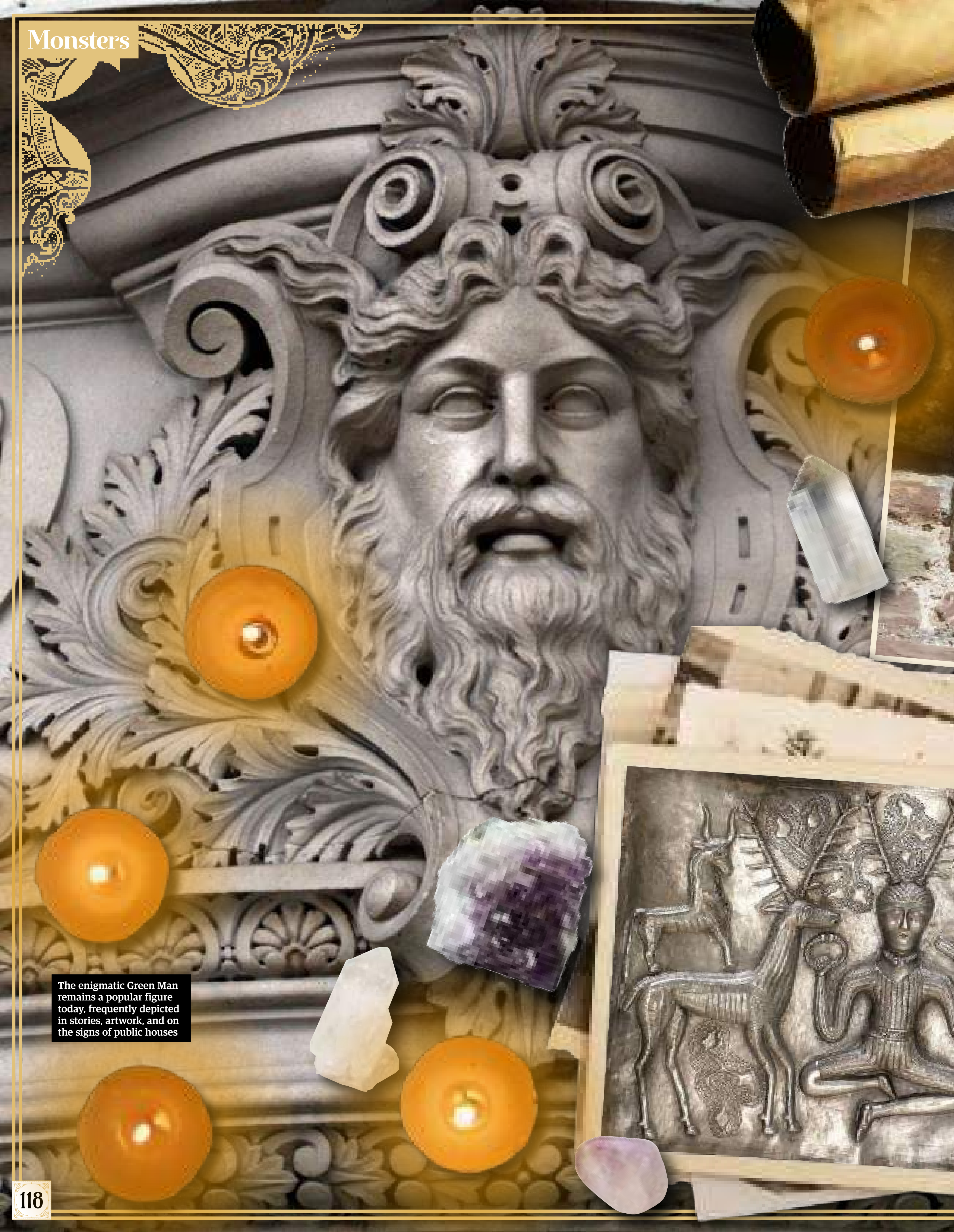


Fairies were known for their mischievous nature, but this could take a sinister turn without warning, often at the expense of those with whom they interacted



Nothing is what it seems in fairyland. Gold turns to leaves, food to twigs, and one day there could be a lifetime in the world above

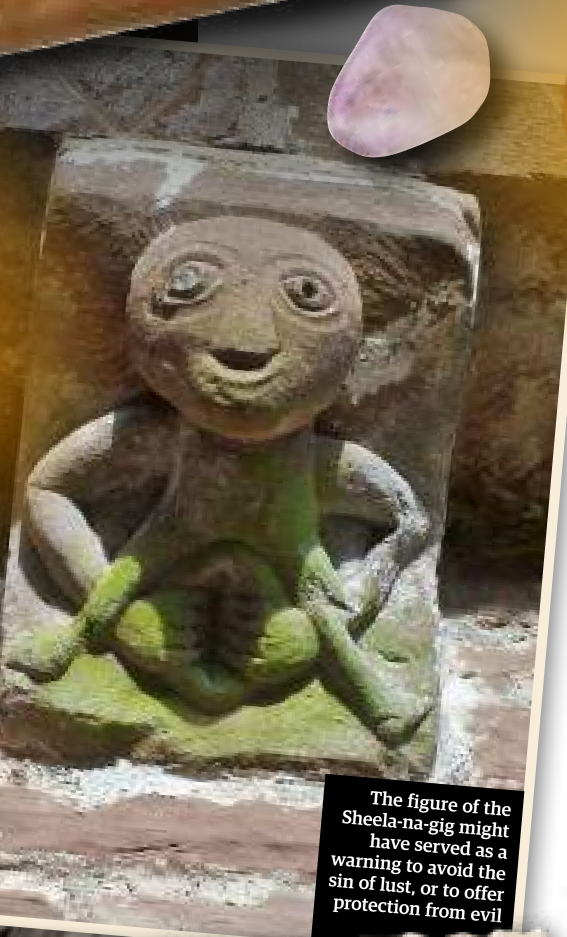


The enigmatic Green Man remains a popular figure today, frequently depicted in stories, artwork, and on the signs of public houses

The old gods

Relics of a pagan past or just mysterious objets d'art found in ancient buildings? These strange figures have had stories told about them for centuries

Written by Willow Winsham



The figure of the Sheela-na-gig might have served as a warning to avoid the sin of lust, or to offer protection from evil

The horned god Cernunnos is generally depicted cross-legged, with antlers and surrounded by animals. He was associated with the underworld, wealth, fertility and life

Ideas of ancient nature gods and spirits abound in folklore, some of modern invention, others having origins in the deep history of the human past. Cernunnos and the Horned One are animal gods; Lugus, linked with Lughnasadh, the harvest festival, and Belanus, linked with the spring feast Beltane, are all such figures.

Sheela-na-gig are intriguing and alluring figures found in many locations, especially France, Spain, Great Britain, and, most frequently, Ireland. These cheerfully naked stone carvings are of a female form, proudly exhibiting a large vulva, and are located in churches and other buildings. There are various theories on the origins and purpose of these curious figures. Some link her to ideas of fertility, with the belief that they were given to women in labour to ease their travail. Another popular but potentially dubious connection is that they're related to a pagan goddess. Their use as an apotropaic device is another theory, but there is as yet no agreement as to who or what the Sheela-na-gig symbolises.

The Green Man is another familiar figure in folklore today with links to the past; the oldest known Green Man to be recorded is from 400 CE, from St Hilaire-le-Grand in France, but is in evidence across the world, including India, Borneo and Nepal.

It is generally accepted as a symbol of rebirth and new life, particularly linked to the return of the seasons as the year progresses. Found in 23 counties across England alone, they are a common architectural feature, holding much in common with other grotesques. There are different variations; the head variously having leaves and branches coming from its mouth, from all orifices, or being covered in green leaves.

More modern associations linked to the Green Man are the significance it holds for practitioners of Wicca and other forms of witchcraft, and they also symbolise the changing of the seasons to the modern pagan community. The Green Man is often linked with tales of Robin Hood, and also the Green Knight in the popular Arthurian tale of Sir Gawain. Although the Green Man as a figure has such a long heritage, the term itself is believed to have originated only in a 1939 volume of the journal *Folklore*, in a reference by Julia Somerset, the then Lady Raglan. In Shropshire, the annual Green Man Festival takes place in Clun to this day.

> "There are various theories on the origins and purpose of these figures"

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Giants

Big in the folklore of a wide range of cultures, giants often represent fierce, even human-eating foes

Written by Willow Winsham

Of human form, with strength far greater than any mortal could hope for, the giants of folklore and fable appear in legends from across the world. In fairytales, especially more modern adaptations, giants are often depicted as of low intelligence; their large, lumbering physical nature mirrored in their intellectual capacities. This is made up for a hundredfold in their strength, however, and giants have not always been as easily tricked as they are today.

Often at loggerheads with the gods of various cultures, giants owe their name to the Gigantes of Greek myth, and the word 'giant' first entered English usage in 1297.

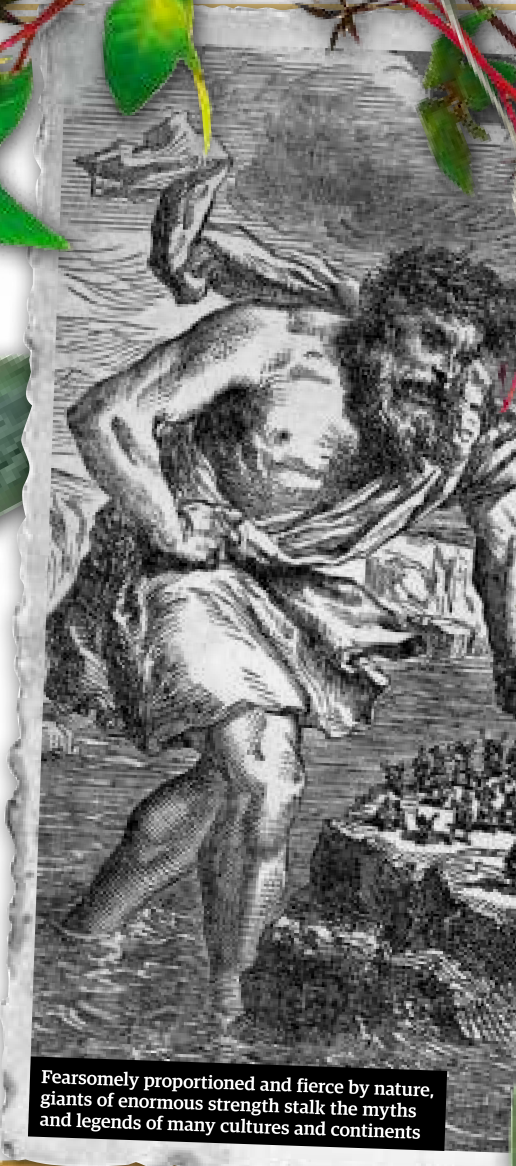
Giants are often held responsible for prominent features in the landscape. Baltic legend tells of Lithuanian Neringa, a beautiful giantess who, after rejecting a dragon suitor, lay down a strip of sand to keep him away and thus created the Neringa Peninsula. In Greek mythology, giants buried deep within the earth were said to be the cause of volcanic eruptions and earthquakes. Rocky masses or large craters are often said to be from giants throwing boulders at humans or each other. One among many worldwide, Benarty Hill in Scotland is said to be a slumbering giant. Others include Northern Ireland's Mourne Mountains and Orkney's Old Man of Hoy.

According to Norse mythology, the existence of the world was owed to Ymir, one of the largest of all giants ever to exist; the world itself was believed to be made from his dismembered flesh after he was torn into pieces when he was slain.

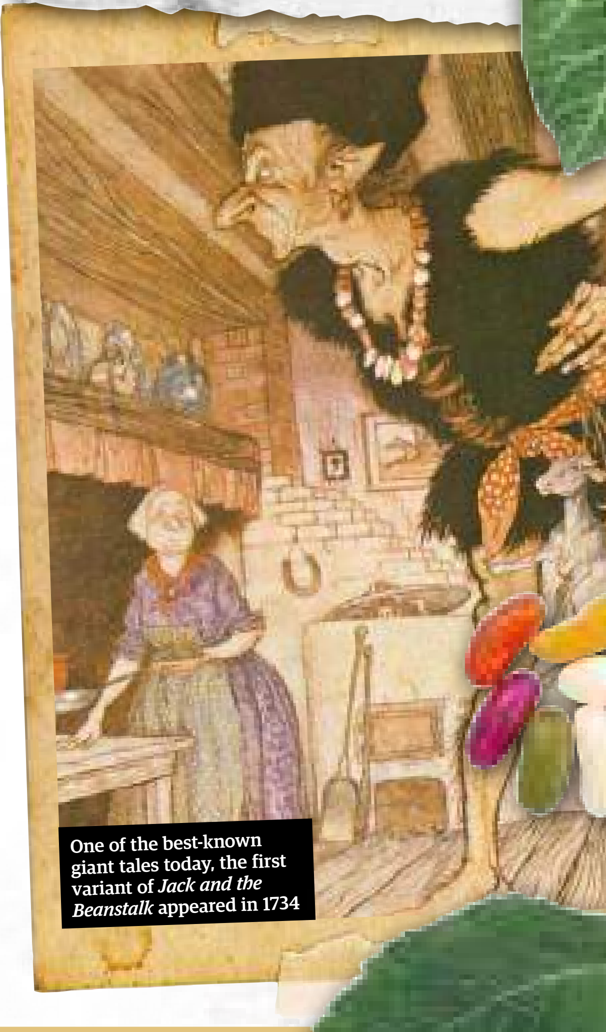
A departure from the larger giants of folklore comes in the form of the Norse jötnar, described in some sources as giants. They were often diminutive as far as giants go, being of human stature, and variously either of exquisite beauty or terrifyingly ugly. The name jötnar (singular, jötunn) relates to Old English 'eoten' and may have origins meaning man-eater or glutton. They include the fire, mountain, and frost giants. One thing the jötnar had in common with other giants was their strength. These beings were to be found in Jötunheimr, one of the Nine Worlds. Rather than a diet of human flesh, the jötnar existed on fish from the waters and animals that roamed the forests or mountain wildernesses. The jötnar are believed to play a part in Ragnarok, the legendary Norse apocalypse. Although closely related to some of the gods, they will fight them, and, in doing so, bring about the end of the world.

Many Norse gods, such as Odin and Loki, despite being considered members of the aesir pantheon, are descended from giants

"Giants are often held responsible for prominent features in the landscape"



Fearsomely proportioned and fierce by nature, giants of enormous strength stalk the myths and legends of many cultures and continents



One of the best-known giant tales today, the first variant of *Jack and the Beanstalk* appeared in 1734

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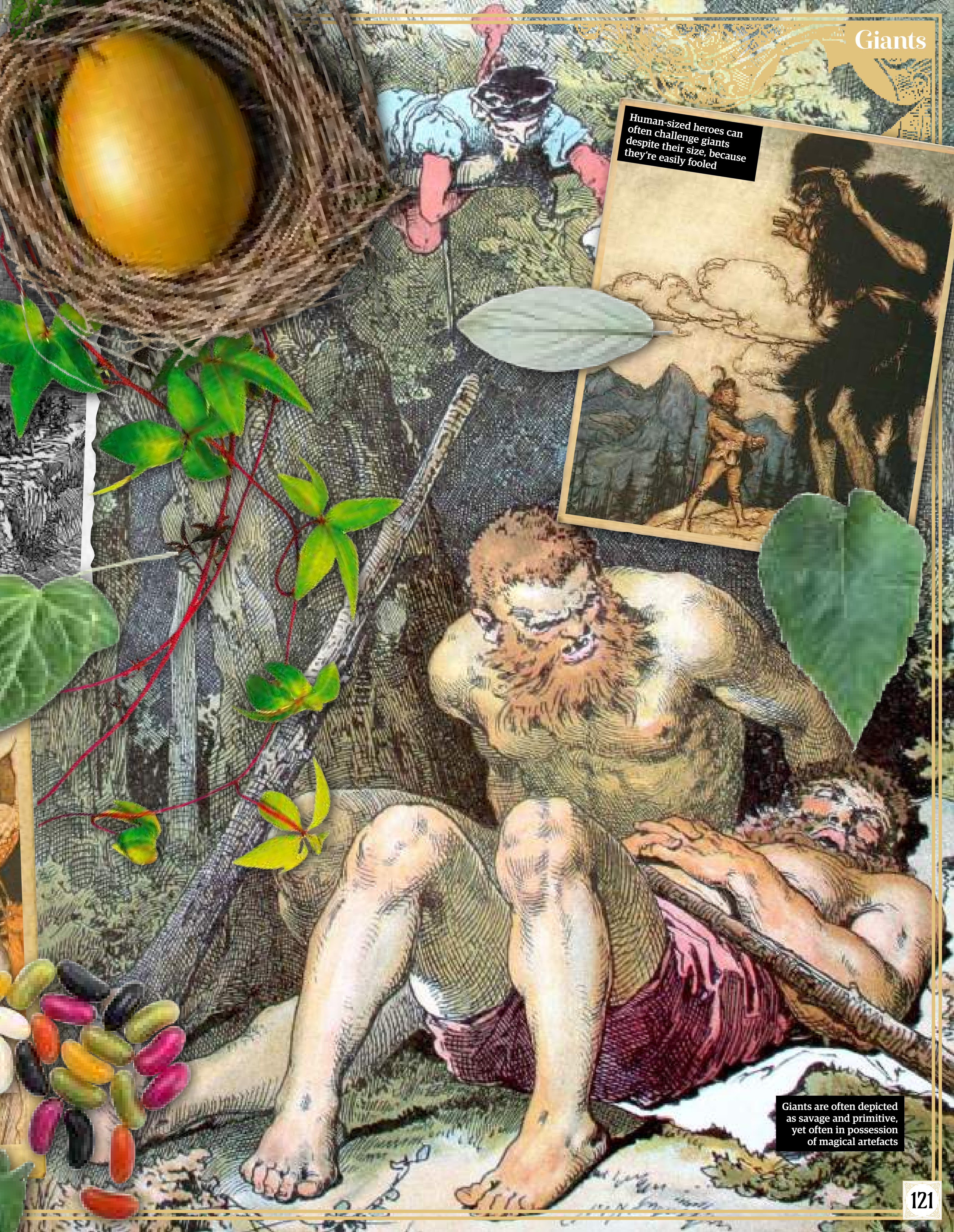
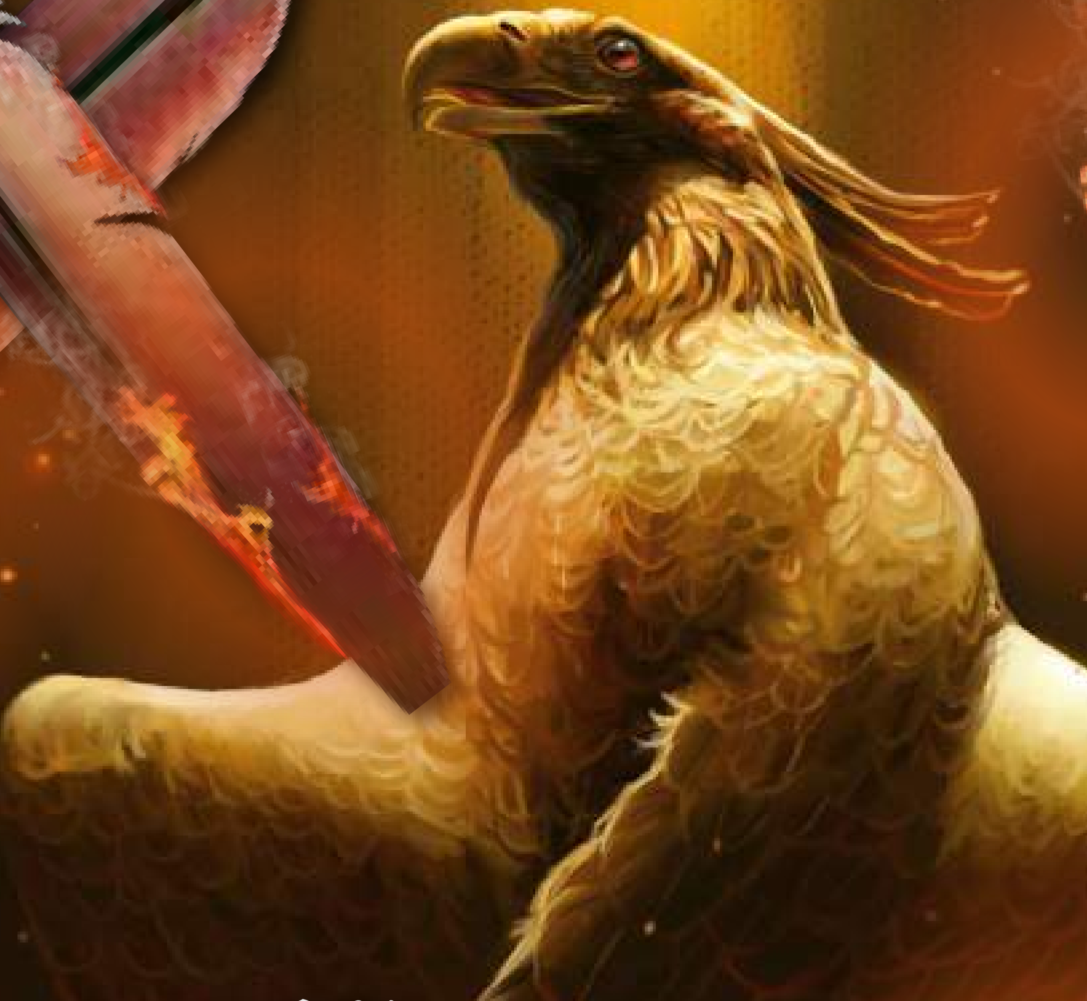
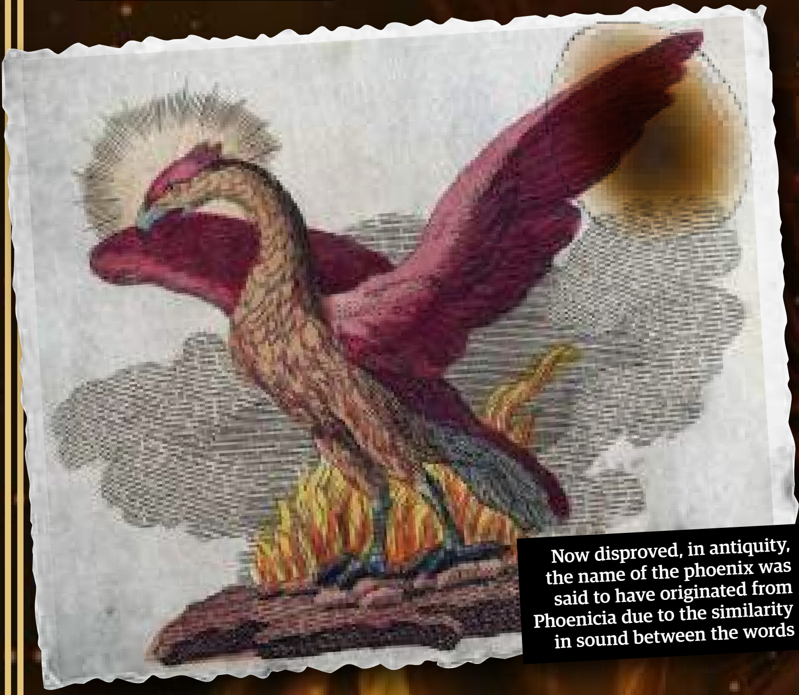


Human-sized heroes can often challenge giants despite their size, because they're easily fooled

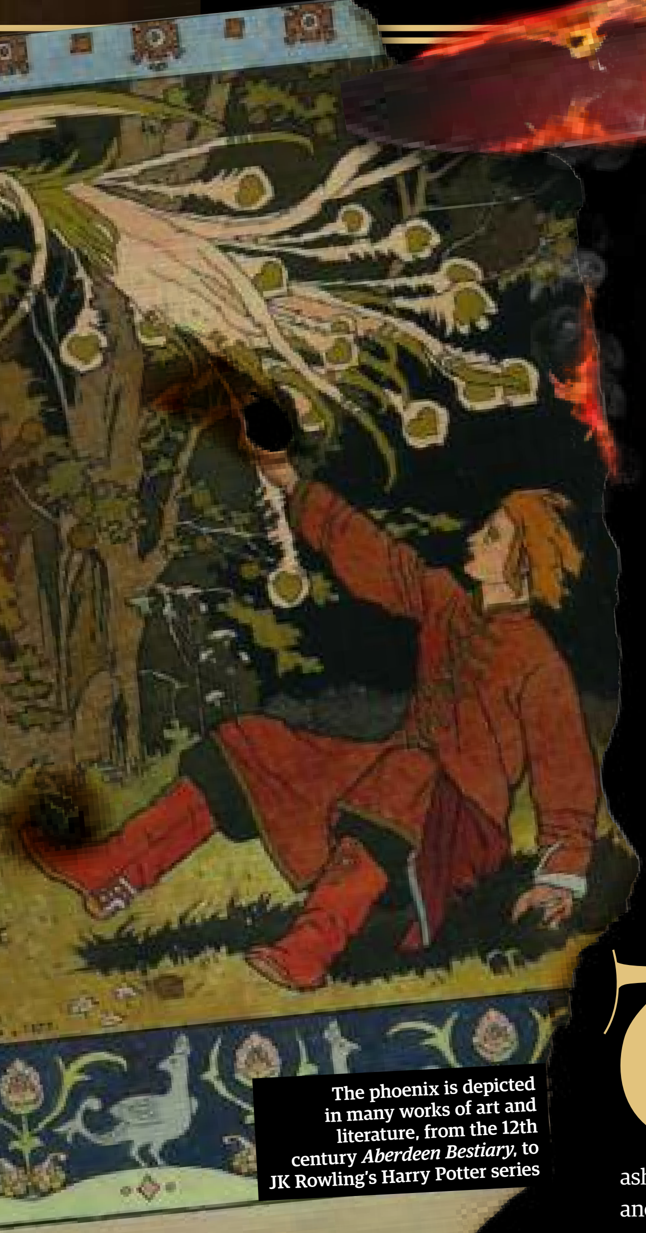
Giants are often depicted as savage and primitive, yet often in possession of magical artefacts



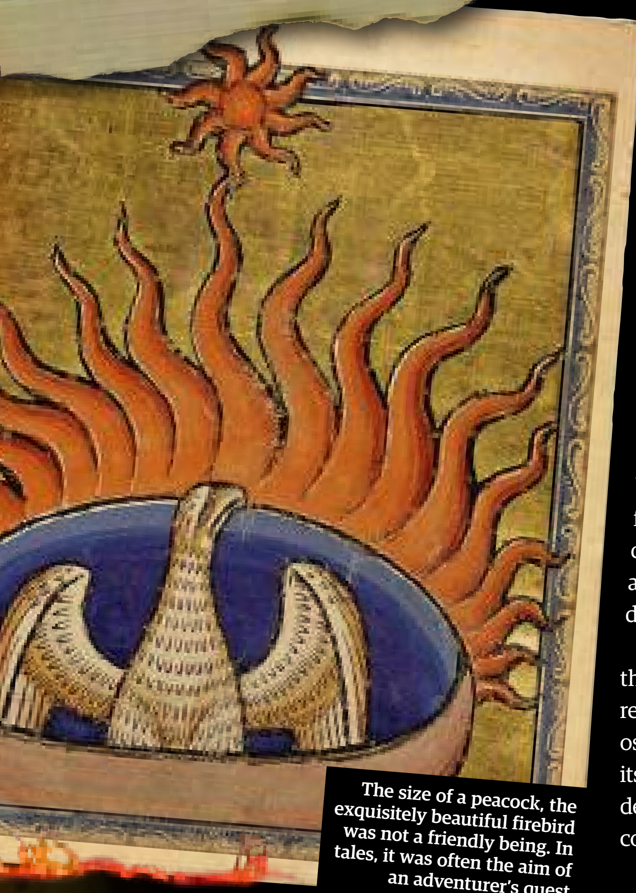
The phoenix famously rises again renewed from the bonfire-nest that it builds when it grows old



Now disproved, in antiquity, the name of the phoenix was said to have originated from Phoenicia due to the similarity in sound between the words



The phoenix is depicted in many works of art and literature, from the 12th century *Aberdeen Bestiary*, to JK Rowling's Harry Potter series



The size of a peacock, the exquisitely beautiful firebird was not a friendly being. In tales, it was often the aim of an adventurer's quest

The phoenix

The fiery bird that rises from the ashes of its nest-pyre also has a darker side...

Written by Willow Winsham

The phoenix is a legendary bird that has become synonymous with the idea of sacrifice and rebirth. Everyone is familiar with the image of the majestic, flame-coloured phoenix, rising out of the ashes of its own destruction to once again be born anew, and young again.

Popular early Greek ideas surrounding the phoenix suggested that the bird lived for a hardy 500 years before regenerating. It is said that the phoenix, upon realising its days are coming to an end, builds a nest high up in a tall tree. Within this nest, it constructs its own funeral pyre, before settling down to await the inevitable.

The heatwave of the phoenix's own body sets the dry twigs alight, and the bird fans the flames with its wings, aiding in its own destruction and, therefore, its own rebirth. There are more mundane versions, where the phoenix dies, rots, and then is born again.

The phoenix is generally described as being the size of a large bird of prey, but in some reports it is suggested to be the size of an ostrich, or, in some cases, even larger. Although its striking appearance is agreed upon, there is debate regarding the colouring of the phoenix: combinations of red and gold are popular, but it has also been described as similar in colouring to a peacock.

According to the Jewish Kabbalah, the phoenix earned the distinction of being the only creature within the Garden of Eden that resisted eating the forbidden fruit that caused the Fall. The reward the phoenix received from God for this was a double-edged sword: immortality, but at a painful price, as it is consumed by the flames from which it is reborn. Indeed, the phoenix has come to symbolise renewal and rebirth in general. In Christianity, this fantastical bird is seen as an allegory for the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

> The phoenix symbolises death and rebirth, resurrection, time, holiness, and the transmigration of the soul

Due to the vibrant colour of this fantastic bird and the flames that consume it, it is hardly surprising to find the phoenix linked to the sun throughout folklore, and early images of the fabled bird have a sun-like halo.

In Slavic mythology, the firebird is a counterpart to the mighty phoenix. Glowing brightly with fire-like feathers, this magical but dangerous creature could, as shown by many tales, be a portent of doom. It's often the object of quests.

Another, more malevolent connotation for the phoenix is in the demon named Phenex. Appearing in the guise of the bird, he hopes to return to Heaven, using a sweet, child-like voice in an attempt to beguile those who attempt to banish him.

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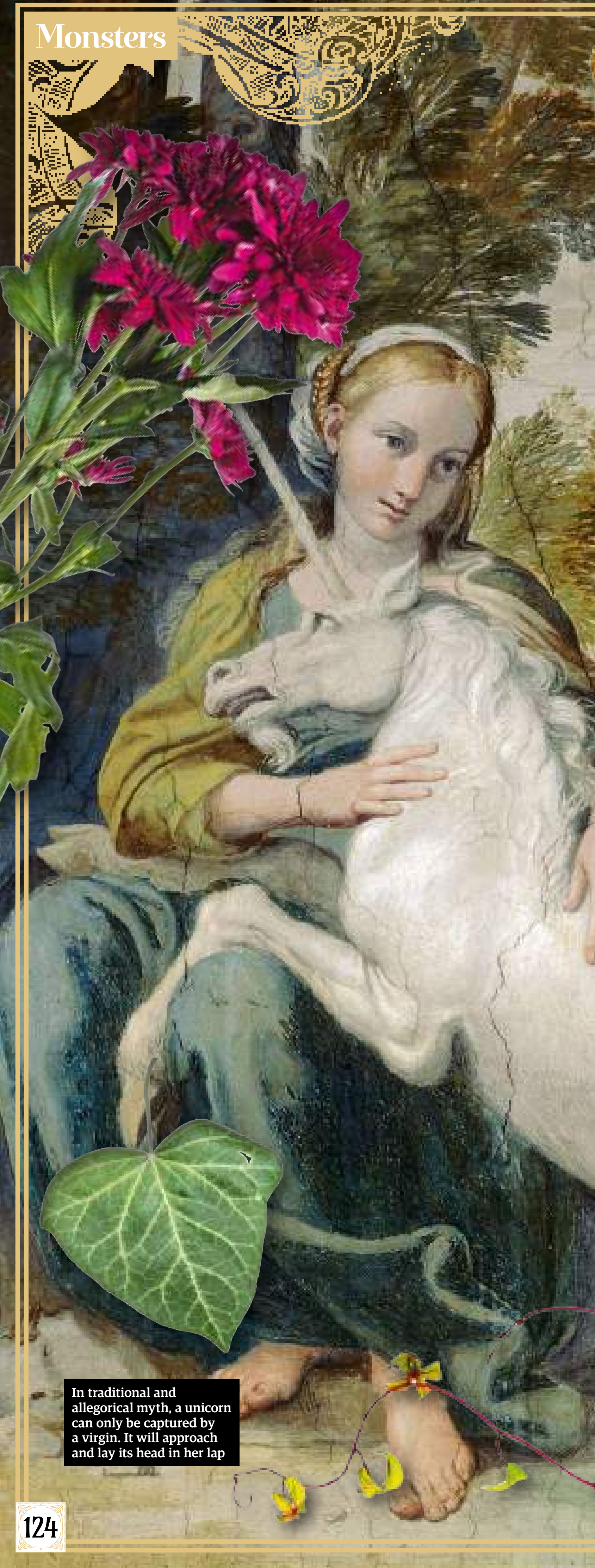
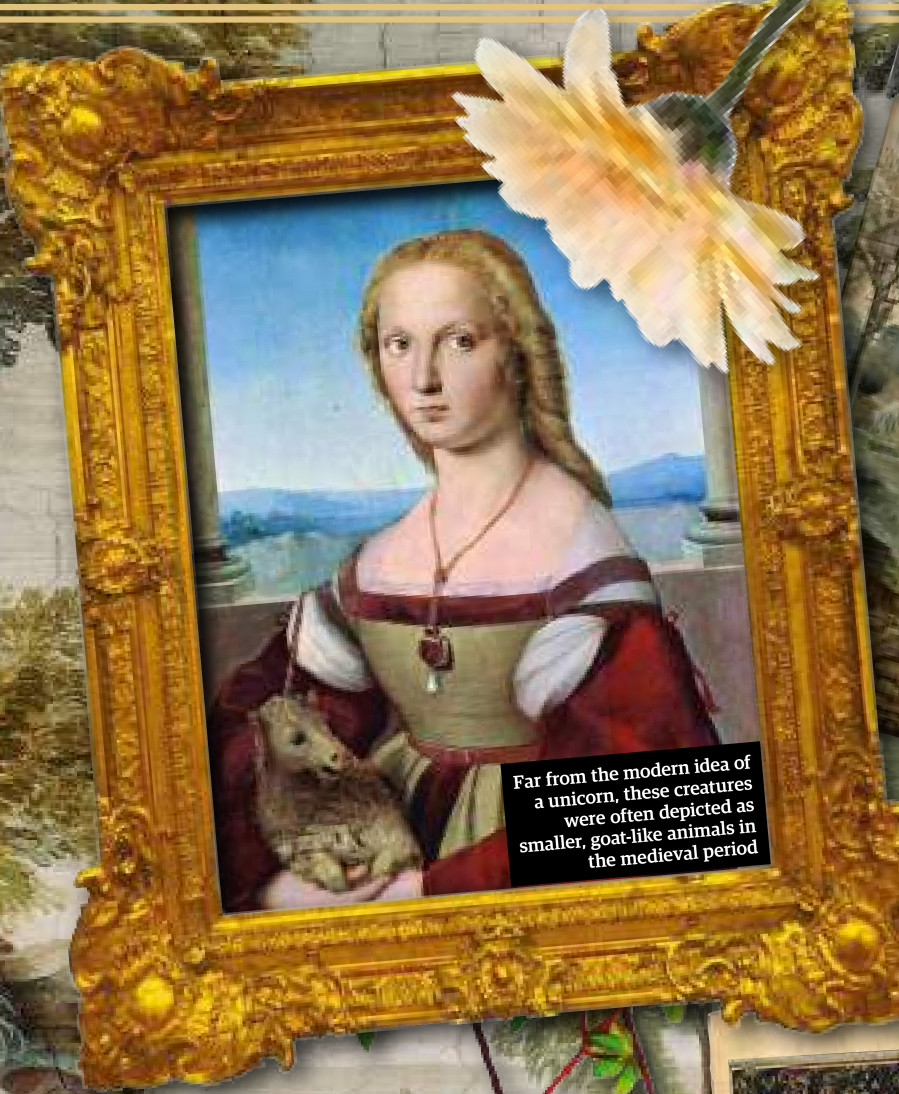
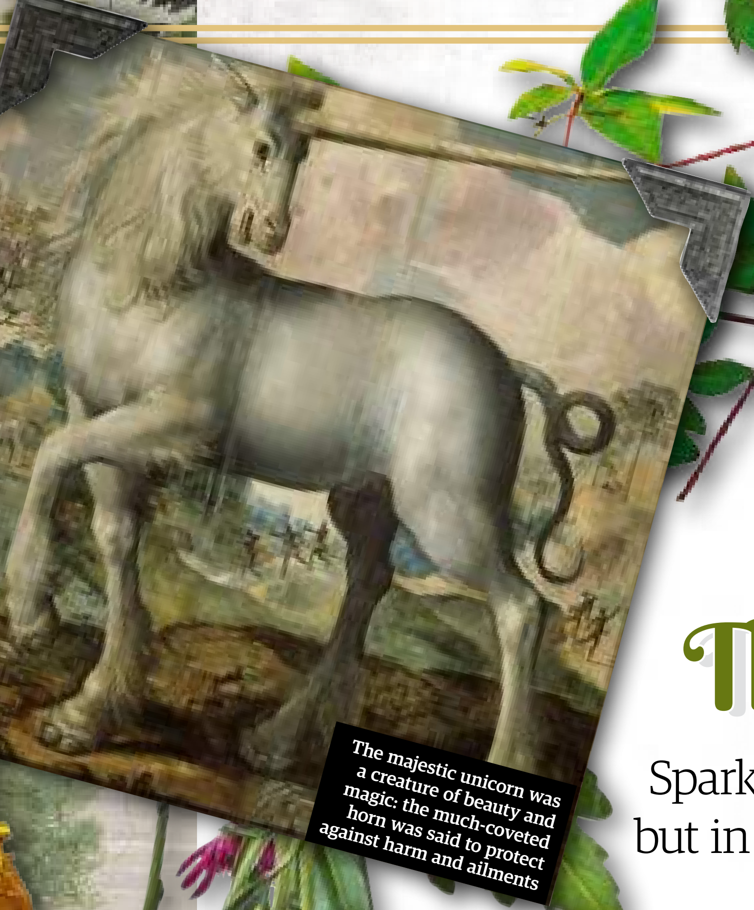


In traditional and allegorical myth, a unicorn can only be captured by a virgin. It will approach and lay its head in her lap



Far from the modern idea of a unicorn, these creatures were often depicted as smaller, goat-like animals in the medieval period



The majestic unicorn was a creature of beauty and magic: the much-coveted horn was said to protect against harm and ailments

The unicorn

Sparkling rainbow unicorns are ubiquitous today, but in previous centuries they were thought much harder to find...

Written by Willow Winsham

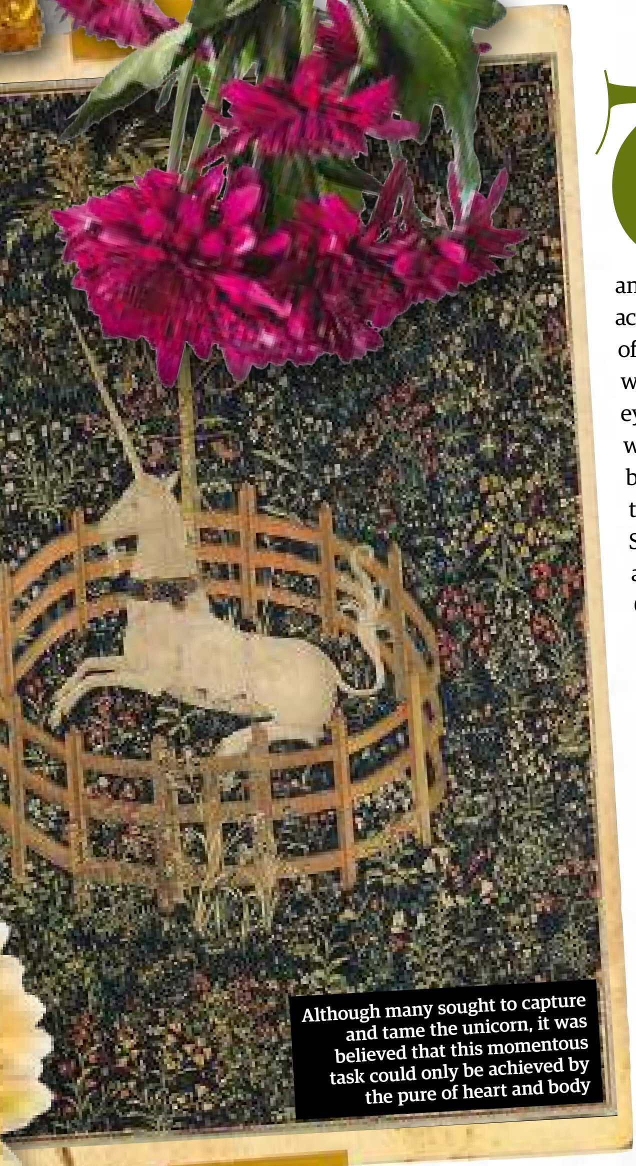
The image of the unicorn as a majestic, white, golden-horned creature of beauty is a familiar staple of legend. The advent of the unicorn into the historical record, however, involved descriptions of an animal of a rather different kind. In 398 BCE in his account of India, Greek physician Ctesias told of a type of wild ass, white in body, with a red head and dark blue eyes. The horn on its forehead was white at the base, black in the middle, and tipped with crimson. Surprisingly, unicorns are not a feature of Greek mythology.

Mentioned by such prestigious names as Pliny the Younger and Julius Caesar, it has been suggested that early accounts of the unicorn were actually sightings of the Indian rhinoceros. The unicorn also featured in the 2nd century CE bestiary the *Physiologus*. It is here that the prevailing idea of a unicorn being able to be caught only by a virgin originated. The link between the unicorn and purity was soon well established, and the unicorn's popularity and its transformation into the symbol of purity and virtue in European folklore was unhindered throughout the medieval period. Meanwhile, the horn of the mythical unicorn has long been believed to hold magical properties. Drinking from the horn was believed to prevent epilepsy, and, powdered, the horn was a protection against dangerous poisons. Due in part to this, unicorn horns could sell for a pretty penny in ages past, although such sought-after trophies were in fact narwhal tusks.

> Today the unicorn is a symbol of fantasy and rarity, describing everything from unattainable lovers to high-value start-up companies

A popular motif in Christianity, representing variously the Devil, or Christ, in the King James Bible, the unicorn is described as a strong, fierce beast. It was a staple of literature in the 16th century, from the plays of Shakespeare to Edmund Spenser's famous poem *The Faerie Queene*. The unicorn so captured the popular imagination that it was also the symbol of Scotland in heraldry, and remains so to this day. The creature also features in tapestry of the 16th and 17th centuries, such as two famous tapestry series, Lady with the Unicorn, and The Hunt of the Unicorn.

Situated in the Castle of Rosenborg, Copenhagen, the Throne Chair of Denmark is, according to legend, made from unicorn horns. As beguiling as that idea may be, the throne is in fact made from tusks from the Norwegian narwhal.



Although many sought to capture and tame the unicorn, it was believed that this momentous task could only be achieved by the pure of heart and body

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In fairytales the white deer compels hunters to follow it, whisking them off on a journey of discovery, growth and even redemption

The White Hart

The idea of the mythical white deer or stag is still popular today, as reflected in its frequent use as a name for public houses

The white deer

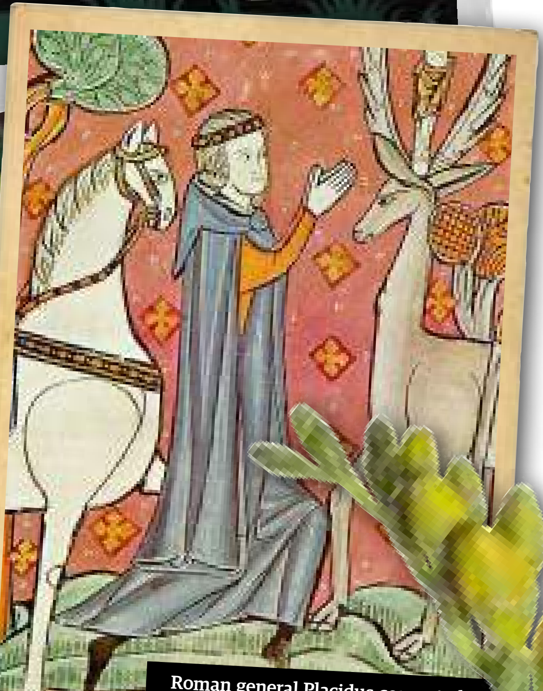
This mysterious creature is often the creature that starts off a hero's quest, but is also a popular name for your local pub!

Written by Willow Winsham

There is nothing quite so majestic as the image of the white stag or deer, head held high and proud, fur seeming to gleam in the light in the split second before it darts away, daring those who observe it to follow. Indeed, many a quest or adventure has been heralded by the appearance of such a creature.

Despite its frequent appearance in folklore, the white deer is not an invention of myth and legend. These rare creatures are in fact of natural origin, their lack of colour caused by leucism, a condition that means their skin and fur are drained of colour.

In Christianity, a white deer has become associated with the conversion of some saints. Indeed, the white deer is frequently seen as a symbol of transformation, either in a physical, emotional, or spiritual sense, for an individual, a group, or a nation as a whole.



Roman general Placidus converted to Christianity after seeing a vision of a white stag, and changed his name to Eustace

A Scottish tale relates how King David I defied the advice of a priest and went hunting on a holy day. When confronted by an angry white stag he cried for God to help - it would seem his prayers were answered as, when in desperation he reached for the antlers, they transformed into a cross and the creature disappeared before his eyes. In the mythology of Hungary, the appearance of a white stag is linked to the very creation of a people. It was while following the elusive creature during a hunting trip that the brothers Hunor and Magor found the land in which they were to settle, marrying princesses there and founding Hungary.

There is an association in Celtic mythologies that the white stag shows itself when some momentous wrong has been committed; the breaking of a law, or a social taboo flaunted, a sign that those sighting it have transgressed and must atone. The stag is pure, a thing of beauty, a reminder of wrong and a rebuke to do better. It could also symbolise a quest, either in a physical sense, or a wider spiritual representation of mankind as a whole.

> The white deer is an animal that has had legends grow up around it until it became mystical in many cultures worldwide

The white deer is also seen as coming from the otherworld, bringing messages to the living. Roman general Quentus Sertonius cashed in on this reverence for the creature: he alleged that not only had the goddess Diana given him a stag, but that its prophecies were true. The white stag is also a common sight in heraldry. Unlike the other beasts on these pages though, it's possible to spot a real one in the wild!

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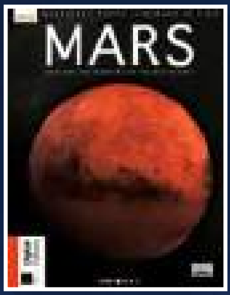

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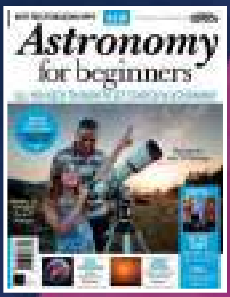
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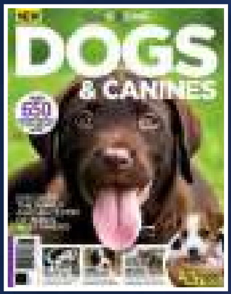
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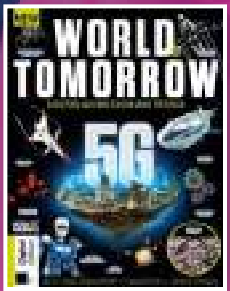
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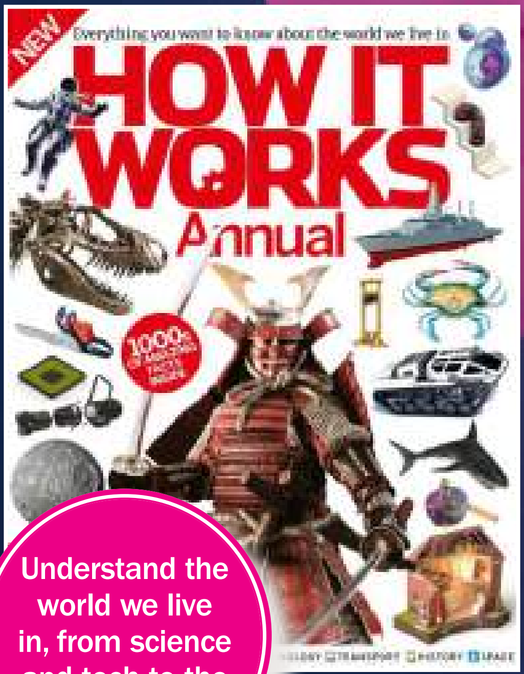
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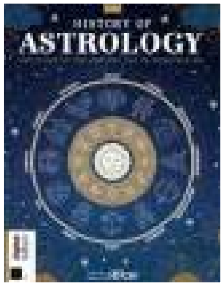
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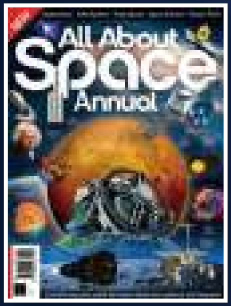
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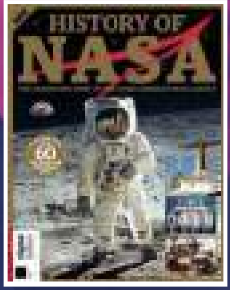
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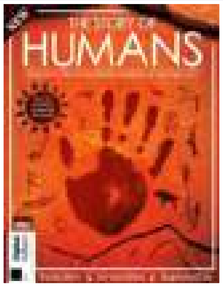
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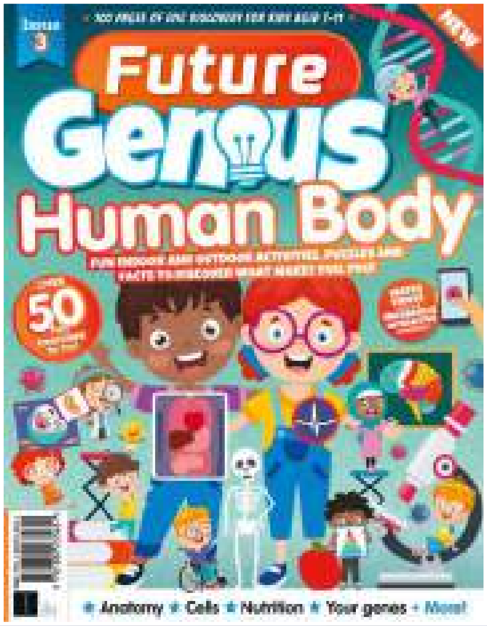
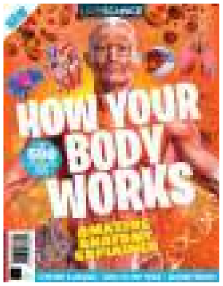
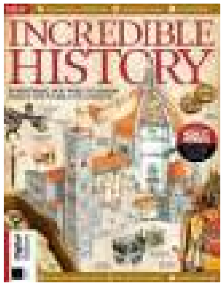

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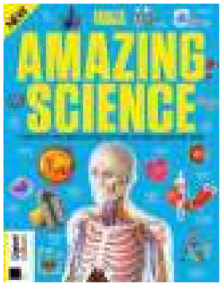
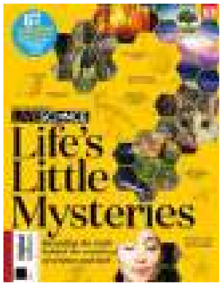
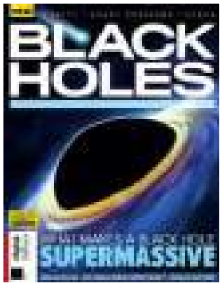

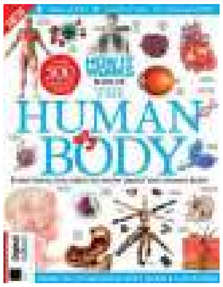

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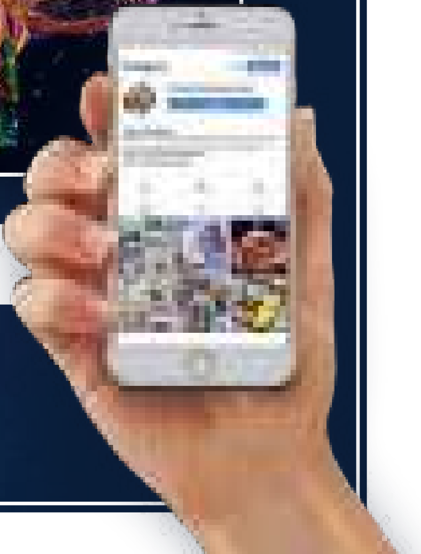

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